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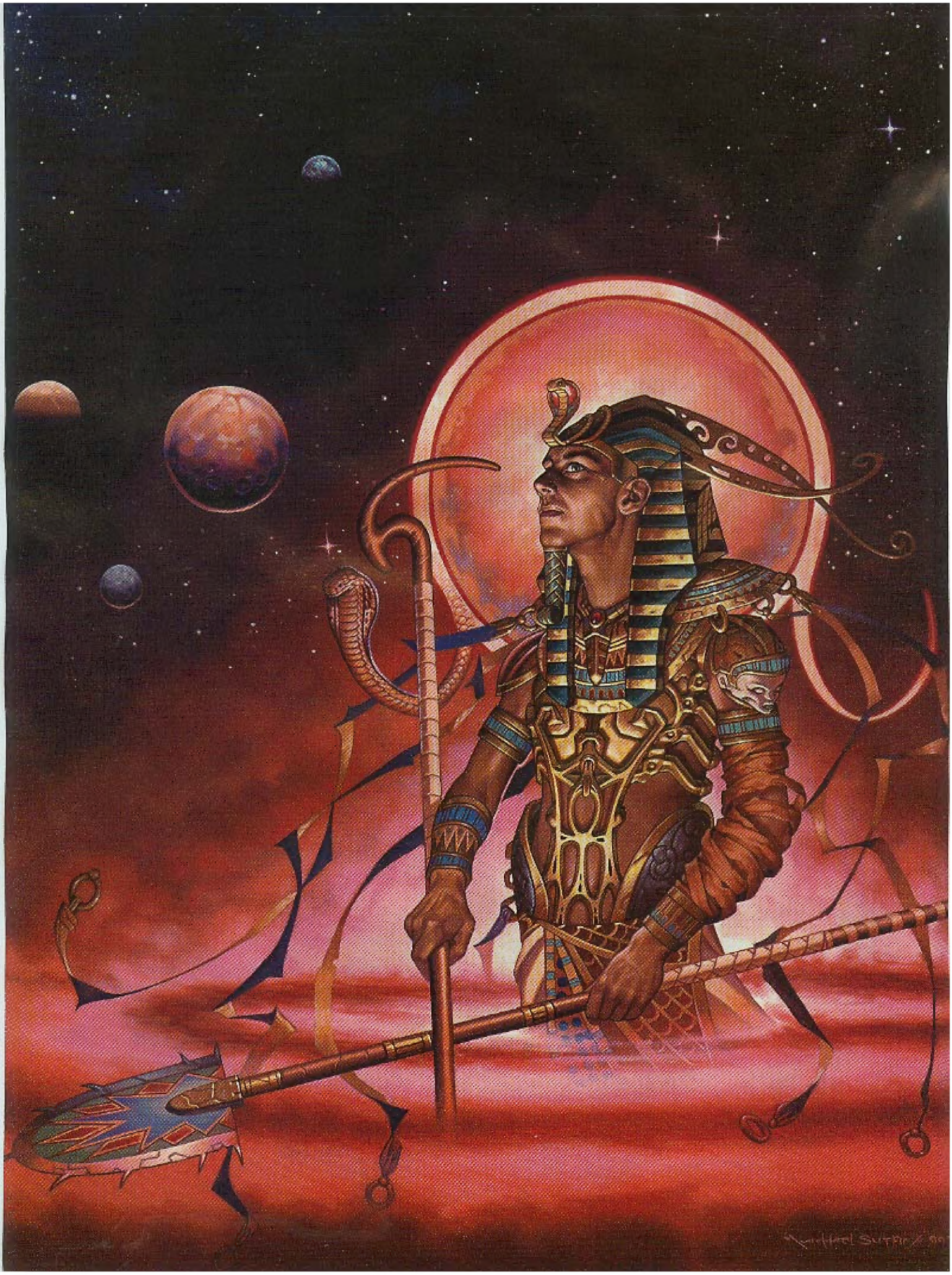

Deities & Demigods

Dragon®

Issue # 263 Volume XXIV, No. 4 September 1999

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On the Cover

Michael Sutfin's paintings continue to amaze us. His research and attention to detail are second to none, his lighting models his subjects in dramatic yet believable ways. Michael remains a credit to his college prof Mark Nelson, whose work also appears in this issue (*The Blink of an Eye*, page 92).

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The Wyrm's Turn™

3rd Edition!

After a full year of hints, carefully couched Questions of the Month in "Forum," and biting our tongues when asked point-blank whether there'll be a 3rd Edition of the ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game, at last we can make it official. The new edition of the world's most popular fantasy roleplaying game will be in your hot little hands one year from now.

The D&D® team (that's right—they're finally taking "Advanced" off the name) announced the release of 3rd Edition at this year's GEN CON® Game Fair. The new *Player's Handbook* premieres in August 2000 at the Game Fair, hitting your local game shop at the same time. In September and October, respectively, you'll see the *DUNGEON MASTER® Guide* and *Monster Manual*. ("Manual" has a better ring than "Compendium," doesn't it?)

Among those who've been itching to talk about the new version of the classic roleplaying game is D&D Category Manager Keith Strohm. "We've been talking about a third edition for as long as I've worked on the line," he says, "but the expertise and support that Wizards of the Coast has brought to bear on the issue made the 2000 release date ideal."

One of the reasons for the silent treatment this past year is that everyone knows how important the project is. "With all the effort Wizards of the Coast is putting into D&D 3rd Edition," Keith says, "it promises to be the biggest event ever to hit the roleplaying industry."

If you're dying to know more about the 3rd edition of the D&D Game, you're in the right place!

A Thousand Monkeys

If the theory that you can produce the works of Shakespeare with sufficient simians and time is valid, then the D&D 3rd Edition playtesting efforts should pay off big time. Of course, the design team couldn't afford that many monkeys, so they used gamers.

D&D game veteran Kim Mohan (editor-in-chief of *DRAGON® Magazine* during the Cretaceous period) coordinated the daunting task of playtesting the new rules. Not counting the dozens of employees—who conduct electronic melee over such issues as initiative, multiclass options, and whether dwarven women have beards—over six hundred outside playtesters have devoted their game groups to the task of beating the gremlins out of the mechanics.

The playtesters are as diverse as they are plentiful. Kim reports that the playtesters consist of "upwards of one hundred groups from around the world—most in the United States, but others from far-flung places such as Korea, Norway, and Argentina."

With that many gamers, you can imagine the difficulty in turning their opinions into coherent reports. But what's the point of playtesting if you aren't planning to use the results? Over the past year, Kim says, "we've received and reviewed thousands of playtest reports. Of course we couldn't use every bit of advice that every playtest group gave us, but overall the playtesters had an enormous influence on what eventually became the final design draft."

Once Kim collated all the input, the design team found it more than useful. "Playtester feedback was always very important in the game's development," says D&D game designer Monte Cook. "We were pleased that most of it was overwhelmingly positive."

And they still aren't done. Unless a fat lady slipped into the corporate offices and belted out a few tunes while we weren't here, it ain't over. "Some playtest groups are still working on the project and will continue to do so right up until the finished manuscript goes into production," says Kim. "We're prepared to make changes to the material right up to the last minute."

The Mission

"We were given one task: to make AD&D® the best game we could but to make sure it stayed AD&D," says Monte. "With decades of experience with the D&D game and other roleplaying games, we knew right away many of the things that needed to be done."

Some of the redesign meant bridging the gap between elements of the 1st-Edition and 2nd-Edition D&D games, in essence bringing it all together into one coherent system.

"Twenty-five years ago," says designer Jonathan Tweet, "Gary Gygax created rules with no way of knowing how they were going to evolve. For instance, he created thief skills based on percentile dice that, fifteen years later, had nothing to do with the proficiency system. Knowing that it would have to be consistent with skills for other characters, we re-created the skill system for rogues."

"With 3rd Edition, we looked not only at 2nd but also at 1st Edition and what came before," agrees Monte. "Much of what we created is an evolution, but some of it hearkens back to what appealed to gamers in the early days. One goal that we always held was to create a game that appealed to the [veteran] player but that attracted a newer audience as well. We were happily surprised to discover that such a statement wasn't as contradictory as it sounded at first."

Consistency was a concern. The D&D game has grown over the years, adding new elements as they arose in supplements or *DRAGON Magazine* articles.

"The D&D game always suffered from a system that had been designed piecemeal, with different subsystems working in completely different ways," says Jonathan. "We recast the rules so that they were derived consistently from fundamental principles."

My PC Can Beat Up Your PC

Whether or not power gaming is your thing, the new rules emphasize action and let you take your campaign to epic levels. That's not just to say that 3rd Edition characters can beat the snot out of 2nd Edition characters—even though they can.

The new combat rules make the game even more action-oriented. "Sage Advice" columnist Skip Williams is another member of the 3rd-Edition design team and one of its most avid playtesters. "One of our playtesting sessions ended in a white-knuckle combat whose outcome was uncertain until the very last die roll," Skip tells us. "When it was all over, the players breathed a sigh of relief, and one of them said it was the most exciting combat he'd ever experienced in a fantasy game."

"From that moment," says Skip, "I knew we had a winner."

One of the design team's concerns was making sure the game worked at all levels. One of CEO Peter Adkison's main concerns was that the game give full support to high-level campaigns, his personal favorite. Knowing better than to disappoint the company president, the design team took a long look at the original design.

"If you look at original D&D," says Jonathan Tweet, "you see that levels past 10th or so were glossed over. As the game evolved, the levels between 11 and 20 got more attention, but no one went back and re-tooled the basic rules to account for the increased level range, so that was one of the things we had to do."

If It Ain't Broke

Yes, the 3rd Edition D&D game is going to be different from earlier editions, but it's still the same game. You'll still see the familiar alignments, races, and classes—not to mention some cool new additions—and the game still focuses on heroic fantasy roleplaying.

As Skip puts it, "We started with the premise that the AD&D game is popular because, fundamentally, it works."

While the details are still top secret, this version of D&D offers players far more options in creating their characters. As Skip explains, "The new game emphasizes choice over restriction and practicality over complexity."

OK, We'll Tell One Secret

You've been so patient and attentive, you deserve at least a little secret. Here's one we know will please a lot of players: Exceptional Strength is history.

One of the most common suggestions from "Forum" readers was to ditch the percentile range between Strength scores of 18 and 19, and the design team obviously agreed.

"Exceptional Strength scores made sense in 1975, when there was no such thing as a 19 Strength," says Johnathan. "Once scores above 18 became part of the game, exceptional Strength became an anachronism."

The Waiting Is the Hardest Part

If you're dying to know more about the new edition of the D&D game, you're in the right place. We'll share as much as we can about the new design in upcoming months, with the inside scoop from the designers, artists, and editors who're putting the finishing touches on the game even now. And that's not to mention the great new miniatures for 3rd Edition. More on those next month.

Until then, check out the cool video interviews the D&D team has placed on the Wizards of the Coast Web site. It's at www.3rdedition.com. After you've seen it, send us a letter to tell us what you think.

In the meantime, we're going back to playtest some more 3rd Edition.

Dave Gross, *Editor*

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Act the Part

I am writing in response to "The Wyrm's Turn" from issue #260, "Your Inner Munchkin."

In his editorial, Dave Gross described making a character that was—let's face it—inferior to the other PCs in that mission. The reason that Dave was not having a good time was not because he was truly roleplaying, but what he played did not fit the role.

Too many people think that, to be a good roleplayer, you must play a weak character. The difference between a roleplayer and a "rollplayer" is not that one person's character is stronger than the other but rather that one person is better at acting like his or her character would.

Gamers often think that a character with a lot of diplomatic proficiencies or a high Charisma score is better suited to roleplaying. What this really means is that this character's role is that of a diplomat, not that the person playing the character is a better roleplayer.

When playing an outspoken fighter, talk loud and often; when playing a quiet mage, sit back and whisper when you talk. If you play a jester, don't be afraid to act a little silly; and if you play a diplomat, then act proper and poised.

Acting like the character that you play is fun, and it gives other people an idea of what the character is like.

Ferdinand Metzger III
Omaha, NE

While Maximillian Vane, the Alternity® character in question, would certainly take exception to being labeled "inferior," his rather ... shall we say "circumspect" ... reaction to combat was only part of the adventure, if the most memorable. The part of the mission that allowed Max to use his high Personality and Intelligence scores was great fun. My munchkin envy arose only when the fighting broke out.

Still, I've taken Ferdinand's advice to heart; so my new AD&D character for Chris Perkins' 3rd Edition playtest campaign is a tough monk/sorcerer who should do well in both combat and negotiation situations. If the bad guys don't want to compromise, it's a boot to the head!

> *Too many people think that, to be a good roleplayer, you must play a weak character.*

Abominations

I'm an avid reader of *Dragon® Magazine*, and I enjoy each issue thoroughly. Since you are asking for feedback, however, I should give it to you.

I enjoyed most of issue #260, and I thought that the article "Spawn of Tiamat, Children of Bahamut" was excellent. I will be sure to use it in the future. However, Mr. Detwiler's article, "Draconic Design," raised my eyebrows.

He seems to think that by stretching one aspect of a classic dragon he can create a new creature. One example is that all dragons can fly, but an avian seems to have evolved specifically to fly. Another example is that all dragons can fight, but the behemoth was designed only to fight. The description of the behemoth reminds me of those old movies in which a jerky, badly made robot lurched through a city. It was not a nice thought.

The fact that there is only a 1-in-4 chance to create a dragon with normal dragon intelligence is scandalous. If you take the form and intelligence away from a dragon, you have not created a dragon. The name "dragon" means intelligent and classic. The dragons that Mr. Detwiler makes are not dragons but abominations.

I would like to remind Mr. Detwiler that no matter how much information you memorize on a dragon, they are never easy to kill. That is the whole point of dragons. He also says that the standard solution is to create a new dragon species, but then he rejects that. Later on his article proceeds to make a new species—which, in my opinion, is not even a dragon!

Giorgio Mariani
Address Withheld

In Greg's defense, I'll point out that stupid dragons (just like stupid people) can be just as dangerous as smart ones. If you don't believe me, try driving through Seattle at rush hour.

In defense of behemoths and jerky robots everywhere, I'd go "Rrrr!" and eat your car, except you're out of reach.

That much said, keeping dragons hard to kill is a good idea shared by many readers. Check out this month's "Forum" for more ideas, and maybe you'll spot some ways to combine awesome combat effects with a few of Greg's ideas on disguising your dragon's abilities from players who know the rules a little too well. That way you can surprise the PCs first, then crush them utterly when they sneer at your pink, polka-dotted great wyrm.

Generic and Specific

I am a new reader of *Dragon Magazine*, but I like it a lot. I would like to see more articles for the Birthright®, Forgotten Realms®, and Planescape® campaigns, but I also enjoy "generic" AD&D articles. I enjoy the Birthright setting because it is the world that I DM, the Planescape setting because it is easily adjusted to any campaign, and the Forgotten Realms campaign because it is an exciting world.

I think *Dragon Magazine* is a roleplaying game magazine, not just an AD&D magazine. Even if I didn't play AD&D or any other game the magazine covers, I would buy it because of the articles that help all roleplayers, like "Dungeoncraft," "Designer Demesnes" (from issue #259), "101 Paladin Quests" (#257), "Pit Traps" (#254), and my personal favorite: "101 Dirty Orc Tricks" (#239).

Soren S. Jacobsen
Padborg, Denmark

When that green-blooded, pointy-eared communist in Star Trek II *said that the needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few, or the one, he didn't reckon with D&D players.*

Soren puts his finger on the dilemma we face every month: trying to please fans of specific settings as much as those who want "generic" D&D articles. Fortunately, Soren also points out one of the best ways to make it work: to try to please the many, many D&D players who already combine settings to form their own game worlds.

In practice, that means we're still buying lots of D&D articles that almost anyone can use, no matter what the campaign world. It also means that we won't print a lot of articles on specific campaign worlds, except for the immensely popular Forgotten Realms setting.

Judging from recent letters, the "idea generator" articles Soren describes have been a hit with many readers. You can count on more articles that inspire ideas no matter whether you're a D&D, Alternity®, or Marvel Super Heroes™ game player ... or even one of those poor misguided players of non-Wizards of the Coast games.

The Name Game Redux

I must bring up a few problems I had with Ray Winninger's "Dungeoncraft" article. While I agree that "Nothing kills interest in an AD&D game faster than goofy names," I disagree with some of the specifics he mentions. Adjectives appended to a first name were commonplace in the Middle Ages. In an era without last names as we know them and where everyone was named Tom, Dick, or Harry (the expression did come from somewhere after all), they were a simple and colorful means to distinguish oneself. Notable examples include Eric the Red, Edward the Confessor, and Charles the Hammer.

Winninger also then mentions names like Conan and Gandalf. While I agree with the latter, Conan is a quite accurate period name in an Irish/Celt type setting. It survived to the modern era with such notable examples as Arthur Conan Doyle and Conan O'Brien.

My third complaint is not a matter of personal taste or historical accuracy but a simple misunderstanding. I might go so far as to suggest most of the names Tolkien used were not created based on his invented languages but were borrowed from historical and mythological sources. The names of his dwarves in particular stand out. Most of the names of the dwarves in *The Hobbit* were lifted from a list of Norse dwarves from Viking legend, a list that included a dwarf named Gandalf!

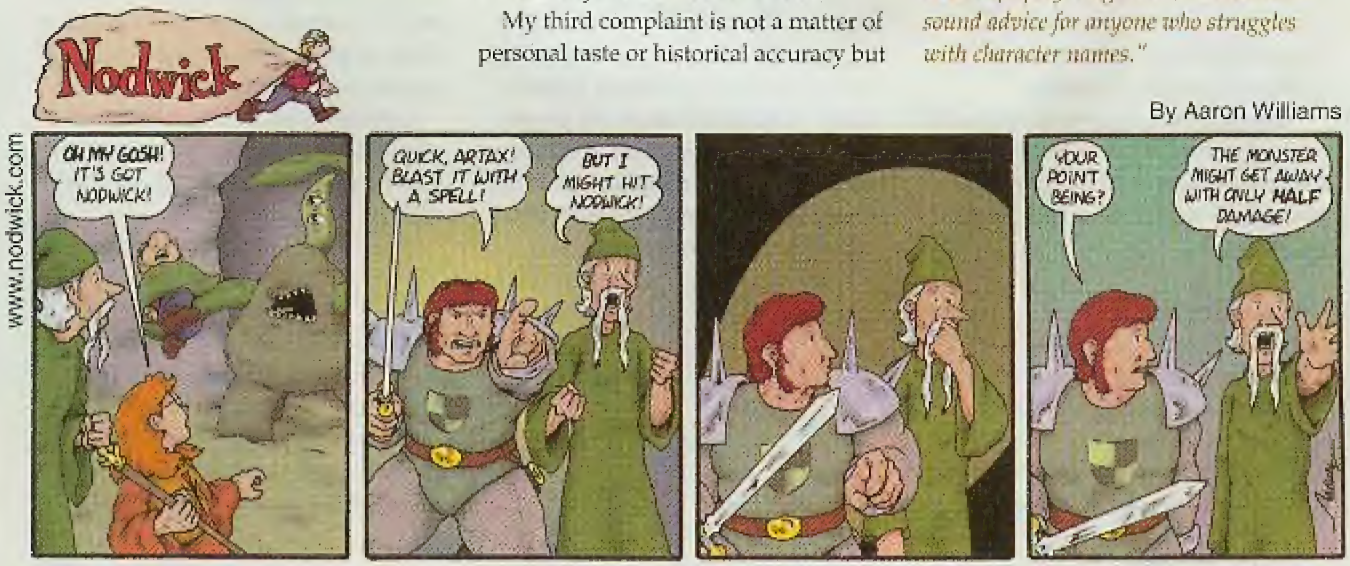
So despite these niggling and minor flaws, bravo. I look forward to both future issues of *Dragon® Magazine* and the continuation of Ray Winninger's column.

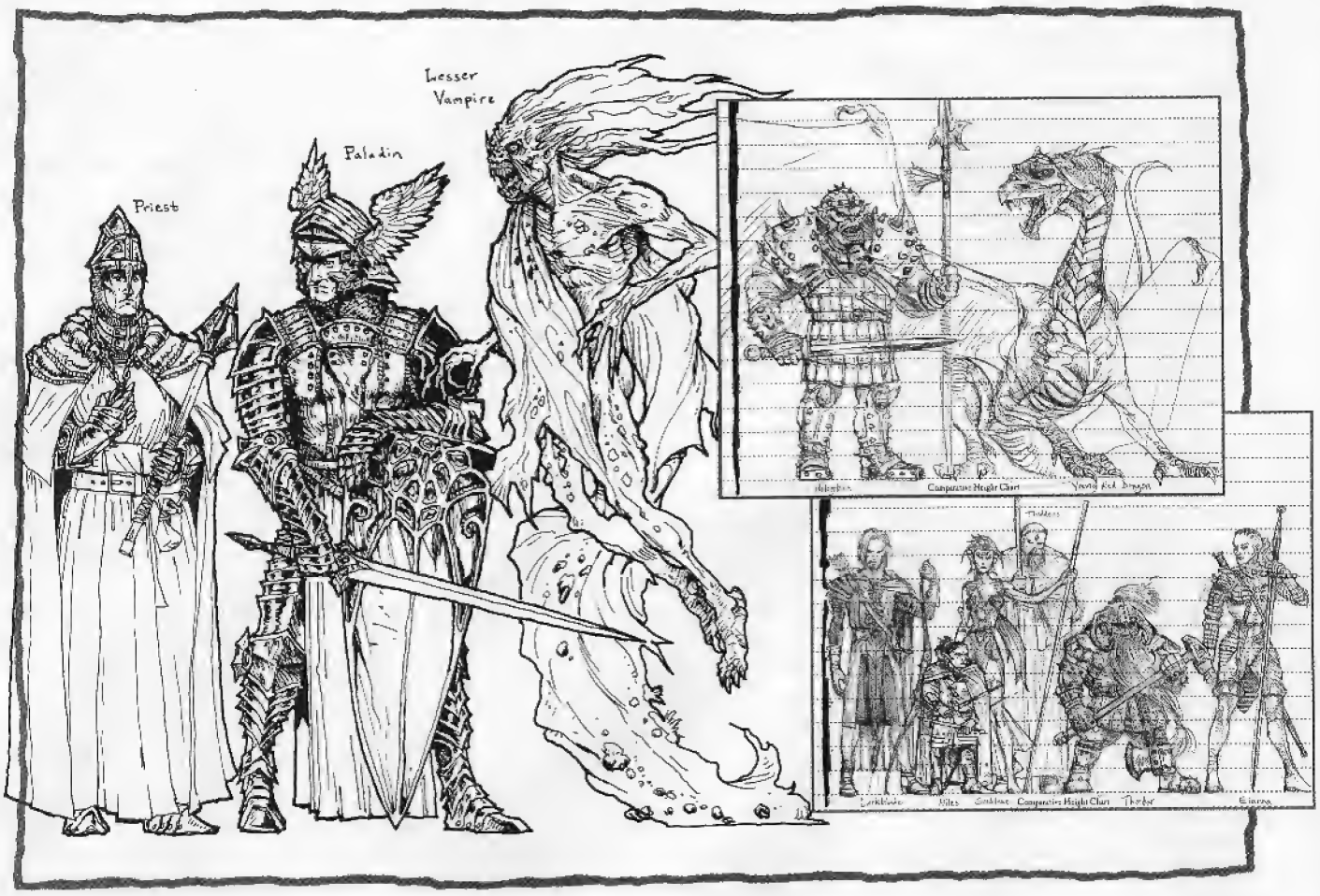
Dave Brohman
Address Withheld

We decided to go straight to the source in answering this letter, so here's Ray's say:

"Right off the bat, you're absolutely right. Once upon a time, plenty of real people appended adjectives to their names, and Robert E. Howard certainly didn't invent 'Conan.' But it's important to note that among the DM's many responsibilities, creating an engaging game environment is more important than preserving historical accuracy. In other words, just because the real Eric was 'the Red,' the real Richard was 'the Lionhearted,' and the real Robert was 'the Bruce' doesn't mean you're obligated to allow such names in your own fantasy world."

"I proposed avoiding appended adjectives and the names of famous fantasy characters because the bulk of them come across as goofy, and their goofiness tends to disrupt play. In general, I think this is sound advice for anyone who struggles with character names."





According to sculptor Chaz Elliot, the finished 28 mm scale metal miniatures will closely resemble these production sketches by artist Sam Wood.

"That said, a big part of the arcane art of Dungeoncraft is knowing when to break the rules. Occasionally, every DM stumbles across an appended adjective name that's so cool he knows he should allow it, regardless of anything some smart-aleck wrote in DRAGON *Magazine. 'Cool' should trump all my suggestions, historical accuracy, and even the official game rules almost every time. (This is a Rule of Dungeoncraft I'll get around to detailing someday.)"*

"Likewise, in certain contexts, you might get away with a character named Conan or Merlin without producing giggles or constant comparisons to your creation's literary namesake."

Where Are My Minis?

First of all I would like to applaud the new format, especially the addition of "Dungeoncraft" and "Role Models." The use of miniatures adds a new dimension to the game. This raises the question of who is going to supply the official miniatures for the AD&D game.

Is Ral Partha still going to provide these services? If so, why can't they show the pictures of the AD&D monsters in their current catalogs? There isn't anything more annoying than not being able to see the mini before ordering. If Ral Partha is going to be replaced, then who will supply the new miniatures?

I have been using and painting miniatures for almost three years. It was through the use of miniatures that my game became visual and easier to follow. At our last session, my players were confronted with their toughest battle yet. Without miniatures, this battle would have been much more difficult to DM. My personal collection includes about forty miniatures, and I hope to own many more some day.

M. VandenBerg
Miramichi, N.B.
Canada

Your timing couldn't be better. Here's the scoop:

When Ral Partha's license for the AD&D line of miniatures expired this past year, Wizards of the Coast decided to launch its own miniatures division, headed by industry veteran Bob Watts. (See "TSR News" from issue #260.) By the time this issue sees print, the new figures should be only a few months away. They'll include both player characters and monsters, ranging from a paladin to a red dragon in the first boxed set. We'll have to wait for the second release before we get to see my favorite monster, the infamous carrion crawler.

Until then, feast your eyes on these preproduction drawings by artist Sam Wood, and check out the full list of figures scheduled for release this fall:

Set One: Human paladin, human priest, halfling thief, elf sorceress/fighter, human fighter, human wizard (good), dwarf fighter, female human fighter. Monsters: young red dragon, bugbear, hobgoblin, lesser vampire.

Set Two: Dwarf cleric, female elf thief, human wizard (evil), human barbarian. Monsters: cyclops, carrion crawler, ogre, minotaur, hill giant, fire giant, ettin.

When gnomes do something right, EVERYTHING GOES WRONG.

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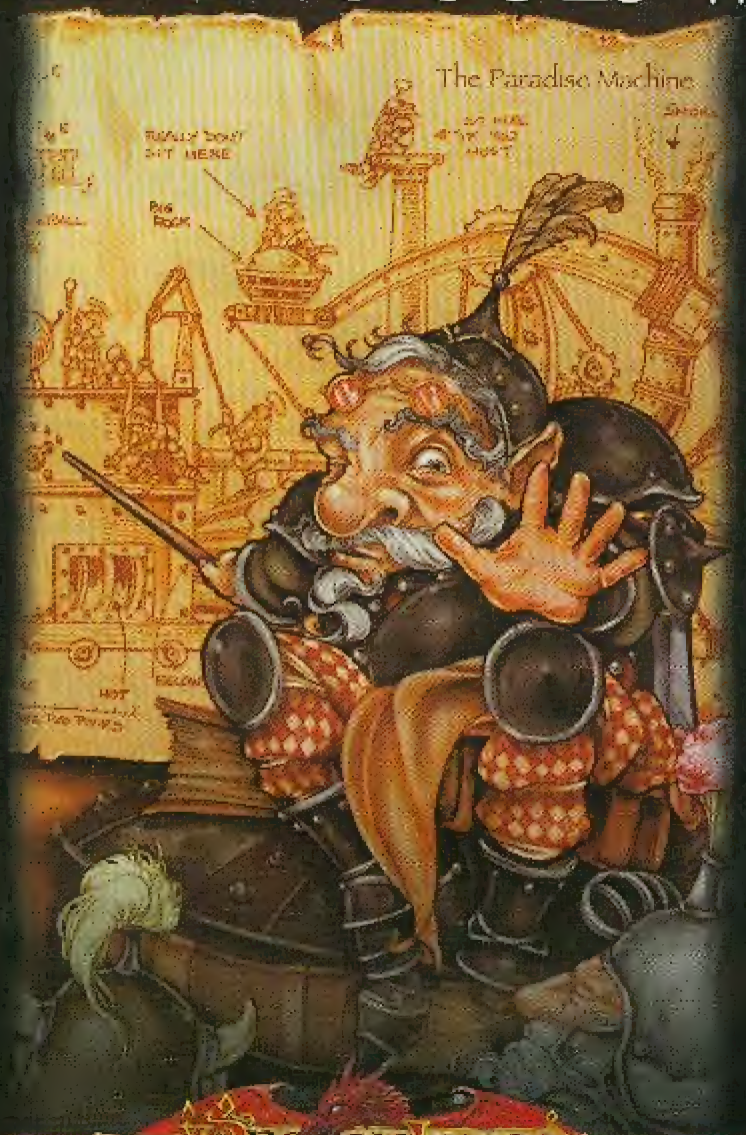

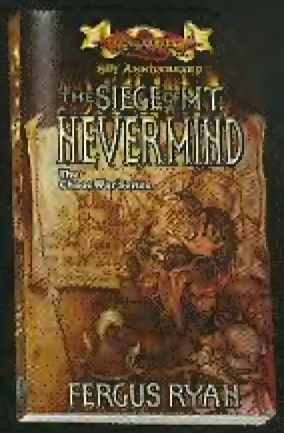

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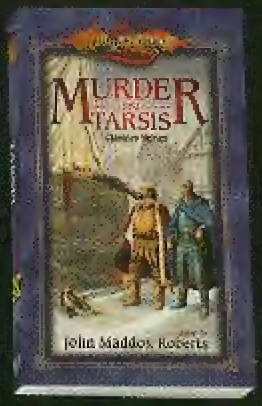

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Question of the Month

Respond to the Question of the Month or any other roleplaying topic by mailing "Forum," DRAGON® Magazine, 1801 Lind Avenue S.W., Renton, WA 98055, USA; dmail@wizards.com. Include your full name and mailing address; we won't print a letter sent anonymously. We'll withhold your name or print your full address if you wish.

When is it all right for the DM to give blatantly false information to the players?

The Question of the Month from issue #260 inspired more responses than any previous one. Unfortunately, we just got lucky and haven't figured out the trick of making every month's question so provocative. That's where we need your help.

Send us a postcard with the question you'd most like to see answered in "Forum." If we print yours, you'll get the credit and maybe a little token of our appreciation. Send your postcards to "Question of the Month" in care of the address above.

Prove It!

The one house rule that has influenced my gaming the most is the idea that if you know it or can prove it, so can your character.

An example of this happened when our adventurers happened upon a hatchling black dragon. The dragon spewed its breath weapon at a member of our party. My friend controlling the PC argued that, since he had a copper shield, the acid would slide right off of his shield, suffering only minimal damage from the splash. We questioned this until he brought out a school chemistry book and spent several minutes explaining it to us.

To handle situations like this in the future, we merely invented the rule that, if you can prove it, your PC can do it. It has influenced our campaign wherever chemistry, physics, or biology is concerned. Another instance occurred when a member of our party threw a vial of Greek fire on a shambling mound while we fled. The vial shattered and spread the liquid on the creature. We argued that when we returned the next week, the mound should be dead from the chemical, like pouring gasoline on grass.

This rule lets us actually use things we learned in high school.

Tanner Nielsen
Powell, OH

The one house rule that has made the most impact on my campaign is the rule that, whatever you say, your character says.

No Bad Rules

Our most important house rule is about rules and ruling: the rules are to be followed, except when the rules would upset the players. In the latter case, we fix it on a case-by-case basis. After all, most of us are playing to have fun, not to make a living or win trophies! Rules exist either to be followed, changed or ignored. I would phrase our house rule this way: There is no good rule that is detrimental to the player or the player's fun.

Olivier Brochet
Paris, France

Classy House Rule

In response to the Question of the Month from issue #260 regarding house rules: In my campaign I have changed the rules regarding dual-classed and multiclassed characters. I see no reason why only demihuman characters can be multiclassed and no reason for dual-classing to be limited to humans. I also allow multiclassed characters to stop progressing in one or more of their classes.

These rules allow for more character development, and I recommend them to any DMs willing to give them a try.

Andrew Galbraith
New Delhi, India

You Said It

In response to the Question of the Month from issue #260: The one house rule that has made the most impact on my campaigns is the rule that, whatever you say, your character says.

I have had several players get into serious trouble because they started talking before they started thinking. Enforcing the "you said it" rule is a good way to get your players to stay in character. It cuts down on idle chatter around the gaming table and keeps the players focused on their characters' actions.

For example, a player tells the DM that he or she is going to steal an item from one of the other party members, and the victim—hearing the first player—says, "You can't do that! That's not right!" In the game, the character just made that statement, and everyone is wondering why. Now, that player must figure out what that PC was referring to. It can't be because the other party member was going to steal something, because the action hasn't taken place yet.

Players spend a lot of time out of character discussing past adventures. If you enforce this rule, you can have quite a bit of fun and interesting roleplaying.

Lewis Anderson
Grandview Plaza, KS

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Where There's a Rule, There's a Way

In response to the question of the month, which house rule has had the greatest impact on my game, I would have to say it's a philosophy rather than a rule. "If there is a rulebook that describes it, and you can justify it in my campaign, I'll let you play it."

This simple philosophy has allowed me to experiment with many different rules, see several styles of play, and expand my roleplaying horizons. The only restriction on this philosophy is that the rules must be from TSR; otherwise, the poor DM is left with the daunting task of trying to work a hundred different gaming systems together. I encourage all DMs to adopt this philosophy, and see the strange and wondrous things players invent.

I would also like to congratulate Justin Bacon for his excellent suggestion on how spell memorization works for mages. I think it works very well within the rules of the game. My personal method was to say that while memorizing a spell, the caster was actually mentally marshalling his energies for a release with the spell. The "forgetting" was just an exhaustion of mental resources.

High-level wizards have more resources because of mental exercise and training. I always compared it to something like lifting weights. You have the capability to do so many bench presses at a time. Once you've done one, you've used up that capability, and only rest will bring it back.

To Jade Murphy, I would like to say that I've always viewed a large number of hit points on a 5'11", 15th-level fighter as representing exceptional skill at avoiding the full force of a blow and the ability to continue fighting. As Jade pointed out, the average human has only about 4 hp! The high-level fighter is able to reduce a crushing blow to a mere scratch by using the experience and skill built up over an adventuring career.

Even a 30th-level munchkin fighter really shouldn't be able to take out a well-played ancient wyrm. These are some of the most fierce and magical creatures in any world!

Jan Lundquist
Wichita, KS

The Price of Magic

In issue #260, Justin Bacon wrote regarding players who found the AD&D® spell system unbelievable because mages constantly forget then rememorize their spells. He correctly identified the term "memorizing" as the problem. It is convenient but misleading. His solution is workable, but it is also unnecessary.

The AD&D magic system is derived from Jack Vance's books *The Dying Earth* and *The Eyes of the Overworld*. The 1st-Edition *Dungeon Master® Guide* refers to these books and offers an explanation of the system. In brief, when a mage studies his or her spellbooks, the magical energy needed to trigger the spell is impressed upon the caster's mind. This energy is released when the spell is cast and can be regained only by further study. Through experience and training, a mage can discipline his or her mind to hold more of this energy. AD&D spellcasters have it easy—in Vance's stories, the most powerful wizards can prepare only six spells at once.

At its roots, at least, this system is more detailed and realistic than assuming that mages draw spells at their whim from a nebulous pool of magical energy. I suspect that the problem many players have with the memorization system is that it is less flexible. A mage might know *gaze reflection*, but if it's not memorized, it won't be any help when a basilisk comes wandering around the corner.

I don't think that anything needs to be fixed. The current spell system encourages forethought and planning, which is part of good game play.

Phil Pike
Downey, CA

> *The current spell system encourages forethought and planning, which is part of good game play.*

Reading Magic

I want to interject a comment that relates to the observations made by Brett Paufler in issue #260 regarding the *read magic* spell.

Relying on a spell as the standard procedure for reading magical writing makes little sense. Although a spell might speed up the process, a spell shouldn't be the standard method.

Think about the process involved in reading magical writings. When reading a spell from another wizard's spellbook, the wizard spends some time in intense study, utilizing his knowledge of magic to decipher not only the language used but also the types of magical sciences involved to determine the spell's effects and intent. Even in the case of spell scrolls, where the magic is bound into the parchment until invoked, it still makes sense that this would be the standard procedure to determine the content of the scroll rather than relying solely on the *read magic* spell.

A better standard for translating magical writing is to create a Read Magical Writing proficiency based on Intelligence. After spending an amount of time studying a piece of magical writing, perhaps one hour per spell level, the wizard would make a proficiency check. Success or failure determines the accuracy and degree of understanding.

With the proficiency system, it's easy to interject a greater chance of failure for nonwizards. Nonwizards don't understand the techniques of magic and therefore suffer a penalty to the proficiency check.

This system offers a method for bards to use wizard spells without access to the *read magic* spell.

The process of actually translating the scroll or spellbook spell for the wizard's own use is already covered in similar fashion by the use of the Learn Spell score based on the wizard's Intelligence.

Stephen E. Eldridge, Jr.
Las Vegas, NV

Pro-Powergaming

I would like to address the constant bashing of powergaming. Powergaming can be fun if viewed as something other than heresy against roleplaying. It's still roleplaying. You're just roleplaying a cheesy movie.

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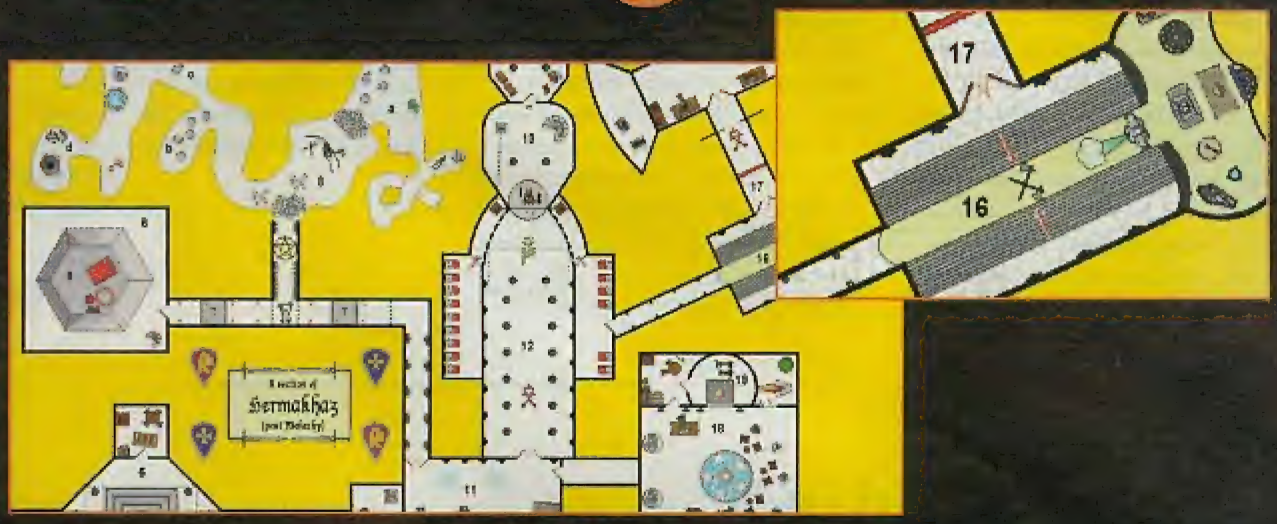

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My players still talk about the campaigns where we powergamed rather than took things more seriously. For some groups, powergaming is a better option. It would likely attract more people and provide a higher level of entertainment. (It's all about social interaction, isn't it?) As powergaming takes a step outside an RPG's "reality," it allows for more amusing situations.

Mike Lewis
Miramichi, New Brunswick
Canada

Pumped-Up Dragons

In answer to Jade Murphy's comment on the implausibility of dragon hit points, I have found that simply boosting the hit points of a dragon isn't enough, so I have made more extensive modifications.

In my campaign I seek to restore to dragons the might and majesty that is theirs alone. They are the stuff of legend: the greatest of enemies and the most powerful of allies.

To reflect this, I have implemented the following rules and modifiers for all dragons. (These rules do not apply to dragons under a length of 15 feet).

▼ A dragon may be injured by normal weapons only if the weapon's length in feet equals or exceeds the dragon's age category. A 3' longsword injures only dragons of age category three or lower. This rule reflects the sheer size of the dragon and how inconsequential many weapons are to such a creature. Notable exceptions are weapons enchanted specifically for dragon-slaying. Dragon-slaying weapons inflict full damage regardless of the dragon's age or size.

▼ All dragons gain twice as many physical attacks as are listed in the various MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM® books. A dragon receives four claw attacks and two bite attacks per round, and it might receive wing buffets or tail slaps should people be in position to allow this.

▼ Any wing buffet, tail slap, or claw attack can affect more than one target if they are in close enough proximity for the dragon to reasonably affect them all.

▼ Dragons use ten-sided dice for determining hit points. In addition, dragons add any applicable Constitution modifiers for each hit die. Dragons are counted as fighters for purposes of Constitution adjustment, unless the dragon is of the dragon-mage, dragon-priest, or dragon-psionicist class.

Only the most prepared individuals dare to face dragons now.

I hope these simple modifications help other DMs. In my campaign, adventurers are much more in awe of the might and majesty of dragons now.

John Wright
Cookeville, TN

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By Ray Winninger

Last month, we looked at several interesting and effective roles that NPCs are likely to play in your campaign. Here are the remaining steps to preparing an NPC for play.

The Anatomy of an NPC

A fully developed NPC consists of four things: game information, a description, one or two memorable character traits , and (possibly) a secret. Before you determine any of these things, think about the specific role or roles the NPC is likely to play in the campaign. As noted last month, your choice of roles is bound to influence all the other facets of the character.

1. Game Information

Game information consists of statistics, equipment lists, spell assortments, and other information you need to handle the character in play. It is *not* necessary to fill out a full-blown character sheet for each of your NPCs. Don't forget the First Rule of Dungeoncraft! Concentrate your efforts on creating only the information that's likely to become relevant during play.

In general, this means that there's no reason to figure out the king's Dexterity score. The PCs are unlikely to fight the king himself, and it's therefore unlikely that his Dexterity score will ever become an issue. In fact, on the subject of NPC ability scores, it's probably a good time to introduce you to the Third Rule of Dungeoncraft.

The Third Rule of Dungeocraft

Whenever you have no idea what the probability of success should be for a particular situation, consider it 50%.

In other words, suppose a metal portcullis is slowly descending in a dungeon. One of the PCs unexpectedly slides a wooden chair beneath the portcullis, hoping to delay the falling gate long enough so the entire party can crawl beneath it. What's the chance the chair can hold the portcullis long enough for the party to pass? Well gee, I don't really know much about the structural integrity of wood vs. heavy metals so it's, um … 50%. This is certainly inexact, but it's simple, it keeps the game moving, and it's usually plausible enough to pass muster.

How is this rule relevant to NPC attributes? Some quick math produces a nice corollary to the Third Rule. Ability scores are often used to conduct ability checks, and a character with a score of 10 has a 50% chance to pass such a check. This means that if you need an ability score for an NPC and haven't already determined it, the Third Rule of Dungeoncraft suggests that you use a score of 10.

This rule jibes nicely with what the *Player's Handbook* has to say about ability scores ("Ability Scores and What They Mean" in Chapter One)—a score of 10 is an average value for the typical inhabitant of an AD&D® campaign world. This means that when you assign ability scores to your NPCs, you should only bother thinking about and listing his or her exceptional scores—those substantially less than or greater than ten (say, those scores less than 8 or greater than 12).

During play, if a score you haven't created becomes relevant, simply presume it's 10, and move on. If you take this advice, you suddenly have far fewer numbers to create and record. This may not save a lot of effort right now, but after your campaign grows and you have several dozen NPCs in play, you'll recognize the benefit. You'll also notice that you can dispense with determining ability scores altogether for a wide range of characters who are unlikely to have any extraordinary abilities.

Thus, the first step in creating ability scores for any NPC is to decide which of the six abilities is likely to be extraordinarily high or low. You can then go through these abilities one by one and assign the appropriate value. Note that it's usually not a good idea to generate NPC ability scores randomly. You should decide the NPC's role in the campaign first, then assign the values you think are appropriate. This approach makes it

easier to create NPCs who feel like true characters rather than random piles of numbers.

Once you've created the NPC's relevant ability scores, you can quickly decide on a character class, level, alignment, and hit point total. Remember that the inhabitants of your campaign who are not extraordinary adventurers or their equal should probably be 0-level, with few hit points. At this point, it's a good idea to make sure that your choices of class and hit points make sense with the character's various ability scores and level.

For equipment and spell lists, again focus your attention on the extraordinary. List only those special or magical items the character carries and those few spells he or she uses most often. During play, you can improvise additional items and spells as necessary.

The idea of improvising spells makes some DMs nervous. Since the players must select their spells before play begins, they feel it's unfair to allow NPCs to cast spells at will. While you should definitely make sure that none of your NPCs is casting more spells than his or her level permits, don't worry about figuring out which spells each NPC has memorized; it's just too much work.

One of your responsibilities as DM is to make sure that you don't take advantage of the fact that you are making up the NPC spell lists as you go along. Your NPCs should definitely not have access to the perfect spell under all circumstances. If you ever come across a situation in which you can't decide whether or not the NPC would have thought to memorize a specific spell, you can always roll for it. The chance the NPC has access to the spell is, um ... 50%.

Note: The Third Rule of Dungeoncraft is a useful tool for keeping the game moving, not a replacement for your own good judgment and knowledge of the rules. Use it wisely!

2. Description

This entry is pretty self-explanatory. You should invent an appropriate physical description for each NPC. Don't strive for anything too elaborate; just a few sentences will do. Again, try to concentrate on the unusual. Create just one or two interesting physical features for each of your NPCs, and stress them. One NPC might be unusually tall, another might have an unbelievably long beard, and a third might have an elaborate facial tattoo. Of course, nothing says that these distinguishing characteristics must stem from the character's anatomy. An unusual wardrobe, particularly interesting equipment, or an unusual demeanor all do nicely as well.

The real purpose of your NPC descriptions is twofold: to provide the players with details that spark their imaginations, and to serve as simple reminders that help the players distinguish the NPCs from each other.

At the start of a new campaign, you can expect your players to confuse Ragnar with Hroth and Skjold. The moment they're reminded that Hroth is the old guy with the long white beard and Skjold is the fair-haired man with the lute, though, they'll get back on the proper page. Therefore, to get the most mileage from your descriptions, remind the players of NPC descriptions the first several times they are encountered. Try to keep these reminders as subtle as possible. "You see Ragnar, the extremely tall warrior, enter the inn" is more cumbersome than "You see Ragnar enter, ducking low to clear the threshold."

If you have access to a large library of AD&D® game products or *DRAGON® Magazine* back issues, try to find an appropriate illustration to represent each of your major NPCs. (The "PC Portraits" column in *DRAGON Magazine* is perfect for this task.) Not only does this let you dispense with most descriptions altogether, but pictures tend to work even better than the most effective text. Each time the players meet the NPC in question, just flash the picture. If you go this route, try to photocopy the illustrations and cut away any text and graphics that surround them so the players aren't distracted.

3. Memorable Personality Traits

To create an effective NPC, you must also know something about his or her personality and general demeanor. Many beginning roleplayers mistakenly believe they should strive to create deep, complex characters and prepare for each game session with all the gusto of Robert DeNiro readying a new role. You're much better off setting more modest goals for yourself and allowing your NPCs to develop slowly over time. As with the descriptions, your best bet is to concentrate on creating one or two unusual behaviors, tendencies, or idiosyncrasies for each NPC. By focusing on just these few things, you'll give yourself time to get a handle on the character and you'll also create another way for the players to distinguish between NPCs and remember which is which.

When creating these personality traits, confine yourself to simple behaviors that are clearly demonstrable during play. "Hrothgar has a deep-seated hatred of his mother" is not a useful trait, because there is no way to demonstrate it to the players short of pausing every so often for Hrothgar to say, "You know, I really have a deep-seated hatred of my mother."

"Hrothgar is hard of hearing and asks everyone to repeat everything they say," "Hrothgar is clumsy and bumbles every task he is given," or "Hrothgar is a silent loner who almost never says a word" are all much more appropriate. Each of these characteristics can be easily roleplayed in a wide variety of situations. Note that a valid and useful personality trait needn't necessarily say anything obvious about a character's personality at all. A catch phrase (Homer Simpson's trademark "D'Oh!"), a gesture, or a funny voice are all workable. Once you start to use this method, you'll learn that the traits lead to the character's personality almost by magic.

Designing NPCs

Step 1. Generate the Game Information
Step 2. Write a Description
Step 3. Choose a Memorable Character Trait
Step 4. Devise a Secret

4. Secret

The Second Rule of Dungeoncraft tells us that each time we invent a significant detail about the campaign, we should also invent at least one secret pertaining to that detail. Many NPCs are important enough to qualify for this treatment themselves. As a general rule, any NPCs the players are likely to encounter consistently for a few months of game time or more deserve their own secrets. Valid exceptions might be NPCs who tend to remain completely in the background, such as innkeepers, merchants, and other service people.

Yes, this means that your campaign is bound to resemble a soap opera, with never-ending twists, turns, and unexpected revelations. This is a good thing. Many people become addicted to soap operas for a reason—the desire to uncover the next secret or unravel the next plot twist is a powerful urge. By giving your players plenty of mysteries, you'll keep them interested in the campaign and coming back for more.

We've already discussed strategies for creating secrets elsewhere (*DRAGON Magazine* #256), but there are a few approaches that work particularly well when it comes to NPCs. Unexpected relationships ("Luke, I am your father!"), shady pasts, and hidden motivations all work well. If you're having a hard time creating a specific secret for a particular NPC, you can look back to the various roles I outlined last issue for a clue. An NPC designed to provide the players with exposition probably knows a secret about the campaign world, while an NPC designed to provide the players with a service might have access to some secret item or power that the players will eventually earn an opportunity to win for themselves.

Once you create the various secrets related to your NPCs, don't forget to write them on index cards and add them to your "deck of secrets" (see *DRAGON Magazine* #246). Later, as you flesh out the campaign world, these cards will become a useful resource.

Tarrin and Jarrak

To refresh your memory, Tarrin is the second-in-command of the Ironoak stronghold and the captain of the guards stationed there. Years ago, he lost his left hand to the curse of an evil cult leader. Jarrak is a powerful and mysterious wizard who once devised a potent spell that saved the stronghold from devastation. So far, Jarrak has never shared the secret of this spell.

Tarrin is obviously a skilled warrior, so he probably has a high Strength and Constitution. Since I picture him as a charismatic leader and a trusted advisor of Richard, I'll give him abnormally high scores in Wisdom and Charisma as well. A 6th-level fighter with 40 hit points seems just about right. Tarrin carries a broadsword and wears studded leather armor.

Tarrin's missing left hand already provides a big chunk of his description. I've further decided that he's an older man with a pencil-thin mustache who always wears a perfectly immaculate uniform.

For his first memorable trait, I've decided that Tarrin inevitably lapses into war stories culled from the many campaigns in which he served. For a second, it might be fun if he interrupts all of his long speeches to bark orders to his men.

Tarrin's secret pertains to his severed hand and was discussed last issue.

Tarrin: AC 6 (Studded leather); F6; hp 40; NG; Str 15, Con 14, Wis 14, Cha 14.

Description: Missing left hand; older man with a pencil-thin mustache.

Memorable Personality Traits: Tells war stories, constantly barks orders to his men.

Secret: Missing hand is "alive" and seeking him out.

Jarrak, on the other hand, is a powerful wizard. Obviously he has a high Intelligence, and I think it's appropriate to give him high scores in Wisdom and Charisma as well. Jarrak is a 14th-level wizard. He wears *bracers of defense AC 2* and carries a *staff of the magi*. He is particularly fond of the *teleport* spell and various illusions.

As for a description, Jarrak is a thin, bony man who wears a flowing black robe and a skullcap crafted from raven feathers. His eyes are completely black, with no irises.

Jarrak speaks only when spoken to, and only when he can answer a direct question with a question of his own. This should give him a spooky, otherworldly feel. For a second trait, he tends to come and go at unexpected times without warning.

Jarrak's secret is the mysterious spell he crafted several years ago to save Ironoak.

Jarrak: CG; AC 2 (bracers); W 14; hp 38; Int 18, Wis 18, Cha 15.

Description: Extremely thin, ageless man in black robe and skullcap; black eyes.

Memorable Personality Trait: Speaks only when spoken to and only in questions; comes and goes unexpectedly in a mysterious fashion.

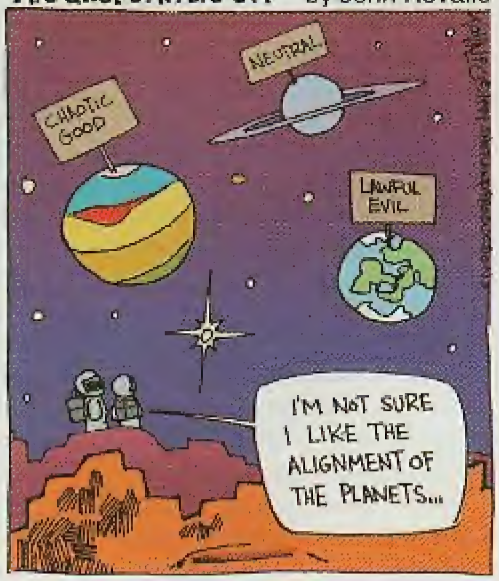
Secret: Powerful spell known only to him.

As you finish each of your NPCs, summarize all of the relevant information on an index card. Later, this will provide you with easy means for filing away and keeping track of the dozens of characters you'll create as your campaign grows.

Next month we'll start to map the wilderness the players are likely to explore throughout the first few months of the campaign.

Ray Winninger (Wis 6, Con 7, AC 9, hp 3). Description: tall guy with glasses. Roleplaying Hook: talks too much.

The Unspeakable Oaf by John Kovalic



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Sage Advice

By Skip Williams

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The Sage cannot make personal replies; please include no SASE with your questions.

This month, the Sage examines a potpourri of questions about the AD&D® game, including a string of queries about specialty priests from the FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting.

Does a fire elemental have any weight? Other elementals clearly do, or at least they can supply force. If a character were immune to fire, could the elemental cause harm beyond smothering? Can a character lift a fire elemental with telekinesis? Do they leave footprints in mud?

Fire elementals are corporeal creatures; their bodies have mass, meaning they have weight if there is gravity. So, the short answer to all your questions is, "yes."

Opponents immune to fire (such as red dragons and fire giants) suffer damage from a fire elemental's attacks. Reduce the damage by one point per die, but never reduce damage below one point per die. A fire elemental cannot set a fire-resistant opponent aflame.

The *Skills & Powers* book introduces subabilities. Which of the two Dexterity subabilities (Balance or Aim) affects the penalties for fighting with two weapons?

Aim.

Some kits from the *Complete Barbarian's Handbook* allow a character to improve Armor Class through levels. Is this Armor Class based on Dexterity?

No, it's based on levels. Perhaps you are wondering whether some of the same things that negate Dexterity-based Armor Class bonuses also negate these class-based bonuses? It depends on the ability. The ravager, for example, has "natural armor," which works like armor, not like Dexterity. The brushrunner, on the other hand, gains an Armor Class bonus from the battle frenzy ability; this works like a Dexterity bonus. DMs must examine each kit and decide how any Armor Class bonus the kit grants is achieved.

Will a* stoneskin *spell make a difference in the recipient's appearance?

Will a *stoneskin* spell make a difference in the recipient's appearance?

According to the spell description, no. Nevertheless, having a *stoneskin* recipient's skin take on a stony color, texture, or both wouldn't be a bad house rule.

What would happen if a character with a *free action* effect were to fall from a great height into a body of water? If the character can move through the water like air, would he or she simply fall the extra distance and take the additional damage at the bottom of the sea floor?

A *free action* effect does not allow the recipient to pass through barriers, nor does it keep the recipient from floating or swimming. The character in your example suffers normal falling damage for the distance fallen to the water. Once in the water, the character has to find a way to leave without drowning.

Sorcerers from the AL-QADIM® setting specialize in two elements, and elemental mages learn one. If the spell-point rules from the *Spells & Magic* book are in play, do both types of character receive extra spell points for being specialists?

The sorcerers of Zakhara are generalists and cannot claim extra spell points for specialization. The elemental mages of Zakhara are specialists, and they gain bonus spell points to spend on spells from the province in which they specialize.

I am confused about how paladins and rangers can spend their spell points under the *Spells & Magic* spell point system. The tables imply that members of the two classes receive orisons, which are from the All sphere. As far as I know, neither class gains access to that sphere.

Paladins and rangers do not have access to the All sphere; however, orisons are shown on Table 34 because customized paladin or ranger characters (see Chapter 3) can choose access to the All sphere.

Does a *glassteel* spell transform glass into transparent metal, or does the spell just make glass very hard? The distinction is important because of item saving throws. For example, suppose a character pokes a *glassteel* sword into a black pudding; does the sword save vs. the acid effect like glass (saves on 4) or like metal (saves on a 13)? If the same sword is struck by lightning, will it save like glass (saves on a 17) or like metal (saves on a 12)?

The *glassteel* spell makes glass or crystal as strong and tough as steel, but it does not transform the material into metal. A *glassteel* item makes item saving throws as glass or metal, whichever is better.

Warriors with the swashbuckler kit (from the *Skills & Powers* book) get an armor bonus when wearing armor no heavier than studded leather. Is this weight- or performance-related?

Performance related. The armor's base Armor Class (AC value before Dexterity or shields) can't be better than Armor Class 7. If the limit were based on weight, a weight limit would have been given.

If an arm is mostly eaten away by green slime, can you use a pearly white spindle *ioun stone* to regenerate it, or do you need a *ring of regeneration*? If you can regenerate it, how long does it take?

A pearly white spindle *ioun stone* works just as a *ring of regeneration*, which can restore lost limbs. (The manner of loss is seldom relevant.) Just like the *ring*, the *stone* can repair only damage that the user has suffered while using the *stone*. That is, the *stone* must be active and circling the character at the time the limb is lost.

Here are some sample regeneration times, updated from a much older "Sage Advice" column:

Appendage Lost	Time
Finger/Toe	30 Minutes
Hand/Foot	1 Hour
Forearm	2 Hours
Arm	4 Hours
Leg	8 Hours
Head	1 Day

Are ghouls and ghasts affected by holy water? The *Monstrous Manual*™ tome does not mention if they are affected.

Yes, undead creatures are susceptible to holy water unless their descriptions specifically say they are not. If no damage figures for holy water are given, then a direct hit with a vial of holy water inflicts 1d6+1 points of damage, and a splash inflicts 2 points.

A heated argument has broken out in my campaign over the definition of a humanoid and what races do and do not fall into that category. A player used a *wish* so that his character could change into any humanoid form of his choosing three times a day. Now, does this just mean humanoids under the definition presented in the table included in the *potion of human control* description? Or is a humanoid any creature with two arms, two legs, and a head?

In the 2nd-Edition AD&D game, a "humanoid" is a bipedal, generally human-shaped creature (two arms, two legs, and one head, tail optional) of human size or smaller. Creatures such as ogres and giants may fit the biological or science-fiction definition of humanoid, but these creatures are not humanoids according to the AD&D game definition of the term.

Older versions of the game used a slightly different definition of the term humanoid. For example, in the original AD&D game, humanoids were bipedal, human-shaped creatures of approximately human size that were not humans or demihumans. The category included kobolds, goblins, hobgoblins, orcs, and gnolls. Gnomes, elves, and dwarves were not included because they are demihumans, and neither were humans. You can see traces of the old human/demihuman/humanoid split in the *potion of human control* table.

The *College of Wizardry* supplement has a section about the Language Primeval, which allows certain bonuses to wizards when they cast spells. How would this language impact 10th-level spells?

Characters gain a –5 bonus to the base difficulty when preparing and casting true dweomers with the Language Primeval. The difficulty modifier for being a specialist (see Table 34) is cumulative with this modifier.

The penalties for paladins, rangers, and druids who do not act according to their allowed alignments are clear. But what about thieves? If a thief is "saved" by a lawful good character and turns over a new leaf, changing alignment to lawful good, can the character still use thief skills? Obviously, the skills wouldn't be used to commit a crime, but is there anything stopping a thief who becomes lawful good from, for example, finding traps in a dungeon?

Under the current rules, thieves cannot begin play with a lawful good alignment, but there's no reason to assume they could not switch alignments during play (given the proper sequence of campaign events). I don't recommend giving such characters any special penalties.

Does a glassteel spell transform glass into transparent metal, or does the spell just make glass very hard?

I picked up the *Scarlet Brotherhood* expansion and have some questions about the revised monk. What THAC0 table do they use? What saving throw category do they use? Do they qualify for exceptional Strength? Are they able to use "cleric only" items?

Monks use priest THAC0 and saving throws. They are not eligible for exceptional Strength. They can use thief-only magical items and items not restricted by class.

Is a living wall an undead creature? Can it be turned? Does it suffer the same damage from a *wand of illumination* as an undead creature?

Living walls are not undead per se; they're constructs, somewhat like flesh golems. It's fine, however, to

assume that they are "unclean" and to make them susceptible to damage (just like undead creatures) from a *wand of illumination*.

What is the effect on an individual who is caught inside *Daern's instant fortress* when it shrinks back to its compact size? Is the creature trapped in an extra-dimensional space, crushed in the shrinking, or what?

The individual will be physically expelled from the *fortress* in a random (and potentially painful) direction. If there is no room to eject the individual, the *fortress* cannot shrink.

Can a dweomerkeeper (or any other priest for that matter) research a priestly version of a wizard spell? How about a spell belonging to specialty priests of another deity? It seems that, if Mystra can cast these spells, her specialty priests should at least have a chance to research a version of them.

There's no rule against priests researching wizard spells, but I don't recommend it. If you allow it as a DM, all priests should be able to do so, not just dweomerkeepers. No priest can successfully research spells that are exclusive to another religion (see previous question). It's true that Mystra, as the goddess of magic in the FORGOTTEN REALMS setting, has considerable personal spellcasting power. She does not (or perhaps cannot) share that ability with her priests.

What is the effect on an individual who is caught inside* Daern's instant fortress *when it shrinks back to its compact size?

Since half-elves are allowed to be specialty priests of Mystra (dweomerkeepers), are they allowed to retain the ability to multiclass? For example, can half-elves be dweomerkeeper/mages?

Mystra is primarily a human deity and her specialty priests—even the occasional elf or half-elf—are single classed. In general, once a character becomes a specialty priest, the character must obey all requirements and restrictions that come with the priesthood, no matter what options might otherwise be open to members of the character's race.

I was wondering whether priests of Yondalla (from the *Demihuman Deities* book) can use the spells of Arvoreen's priests, and vice versa? Are the spells of other deities open to their fellow pantheon members? I can see how that would be difficult considering the numerous deities of the human pantheon, but *Demihuman Deities* specifically talks about how the elven and halfling pantheons are close and very familial.

According to page 21 of *Faiths & Avatars*, the spells of any particular priesthood are available only to that priesthood. In makes no difference how chummy the deity might be with another deity. Note that some spells are specific to more than one priesthood; if this is the case, however, it will be so noted in the description of each priesthood.

Why, oh why, do dwarves now stink at turning undead? In the *Demihuman Deities* book, the priests of dwarven gods cannot turn undead until 7th level, and then only at four levels lower than their actual level. I cannot think of any reason for this. What was the reason?

Actually, dwarves have not suddenly gotten worse at turning undead, at least not in the FORGOTTEN REALMS campaign. The *Demihuman Deities* rules give dwarven priests better turning abilities than those presented in *Dwarves Deep* (the previous definitive text on dwarves in the Realms).

Dwarven deities just aren't terribly concerned about granting the turn undead ability. Note that many dwarven specialty priests don't have any undead turning ability at all. (Check each specialty priest description for details.) Dwarven clerics have the 7th-level limitation as you noted but also gain a +2 attack and damage bonus when fighting undead. (See the Dwarven Priests section on page 185 of *Demihuman Deities*.)

According to the *Demihuman Deities* book, specialty priests (xothor) of Dugmaren Brightmantle can use all magical items? All? Is this an acknowledged error for which there is errata? If not, there should be some logical restrictions. Dugmaren Brightmantle is an appropriate god to allow his dedicated followers to use many magical items, but "all" seems to be pushing it. For example, xothor should not be able to use magical platemail, since their armor restriction precludes wearing armor heavier than chain. What about items that work best for one particular class? For example, anyone can use a *wand of magic missiles*, but a wizard can get more oomph from it than anyone else.

No error. Xothor must obey the armor and weapon restrictions set forth in their priesthood entry. Otherwise, they can pick up and use most magical items just as though they were of the "correct" class and race to use them. Note the special rules about scroll use in the description of the priesthood.

The ability does not extend to class-specific written items. For example, magical books, manuals, librams, and tomes still affect xothor as priests. For example, a xothar who reads a *book of vile darkness* is in trouble, and the character's flair for using magical items won't help. Likewise, a xothar cannot benefit from a *manual of stealthy pilfering* or a *libram of silver magic*.

The ability does not affect any alignment restriction an item might have. If a xothar handles an intelligent weapon of the wrong alignment, the character suffers damage. A xothar cannot use or even handle a *talisman of ultimate evil*.

***Drow of the Underdark* indicates that priestesses of Eilistraee may wear only magical armor. More recently, in *Demihuman Deities*, it says they may also wear armor of drow manufacture. What about normal elven chainmail? The *DUNGEON MASTER® Guide* says it is "magical armor," although it grants no plusses and had no special effects**

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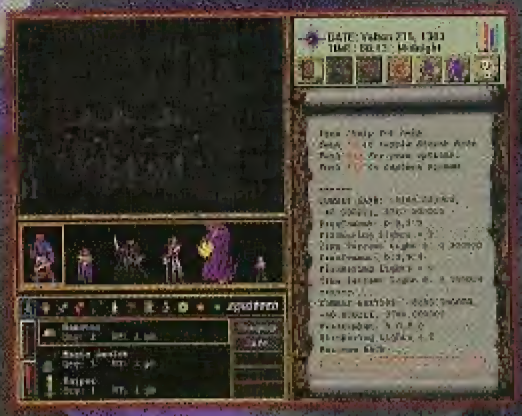

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beyond being lighter than other armor. Am I correct in assuming that normal elven chain does not even radiate magic?

A strict reading of the *Demihuman Deities* entry for Eilistraee would leave out elven chainmail unless it actually bears an enchantment. Elven chainmail might seem to fit the power's idiom nicely, but remember she is a drow deity, not an elf deity. She and her priests do not favor things elven, in spite of their good alignments.

In any case, elven chainmail does not radiate magic unless it actually bears an enchantment.

Can delvesons (dwarven priests from the *Demihuman Deities* book) be multiclassed characters? What does the reference to delveson fighters mean? Can delvesons be multiclassed cleric/fighters?

Player character delvesons cannot be multiclassed, even as cleric/fighters. My FORGOTTEN REALMS sources tell me that Citadel Adbar has a group of fighter/delvesons, but they're an exception.

I'm a little confused about the entries for specialty priests of both Thoth and Isis (from the *Powers & Pantheons* book). They break the rule for multiclassed humans. I get that, but there are some things that I don't understand. For example, when it says that they don't divide their hit points when they advance as clerics and that they roll 1d8 for their hit points when they do advance, does that mean that they don't roll for hit points when they advance as wizards?

You seem to be referring to scriveners and skyweavers. These characters roll 1d8 for hit points each time they gain a priest level (to a maximum of 9d8) and roll no dice for hit points when they gain wizard levels. After 9th level, these characters gain 2 hit points at each priest level and still gain no hit points for their wizard levels.

If a character is rolled with the appropriate statistics for a paladin, but the player decides to make the character a regular fighter, can that character become a paladin later on (using the dual-classed rules)? It seems like something that could happen, when you think about it.

Technically, no. A character using the dual-class rules can have only one class from each group. The DM, however, certainly can allow the character to switch to the paladin class. I recommend that the character make the switch right after gaining a new fighter level. The character should then observe all the paladin restrictions and be required to earn enough experience to reach the next paladin level.

For example, a fighter who has just reached 6th level becomes a paladin. The character must have 75,000 experience points before he becomes a 7th-level paladin. In the meantime, the character must give up weapon specialization, tithe, and otherwise act as a paladin—before gaining any of the paladin's benefits. If the character performs exceptionally well, the DM might want to award some paladin benefits a little at a time, say every 10,000 XP or so. Some benefits that would work well for "early delivery" would include the paladin's +2 saving throw bonus, disease immunity, lay on hands ability, and *detect evil* ability.

If a low-level wizard found a spellbook with lots of spells ranging from 1st to 9th level, could the wizard identify the spells well enough to know what they are? For example, could a 5th-level wizard who finds a 9th-level *meteor swarm* spell know what the spell is? I understand that a wizard cannot cast a spell that is too difficult for the wizard's current level unless the spell is contained on a scroll or the character has some other magical assistance. But I am wondering if the wizard can even interpret the spell in question?

Once a character has studied the new discovery with *read magic* spell, he or she will understand the new spell's general effects and limitations even though the mage cannot cast the spell.

If a low-level wizard found a spellbook with lots of spells ranging from 1st to 9th level, could the wizard identify the spells well enough to know what they are?

What is the best way to make the d13 needed for the breath weapon of a great wyrm radiant dragon?

You've found a typo. The damage rating for a great wyrm radiant dragon's breath weapon is 24d12+12.

You sure have to answer some oddball questions. Have you ever considered placing the question "Which one of you is the DM?" on your tombstone?

No. I began using (and repeating) the "Which one of you is the DM?" line about 18 months ago as a response to all the players who have been writing me hoping I'll help them strong-arm their DMs into making things go the players' way. Browbeating DMs is not what this column is all about.

Skip Williams says his epitaph of choice would read: "Skip Williams, frequently impolite but seldom inconsiderate."

By Aaron Williams

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Anniversary Tour. Silver

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No. Appearing: 10 stops across the country
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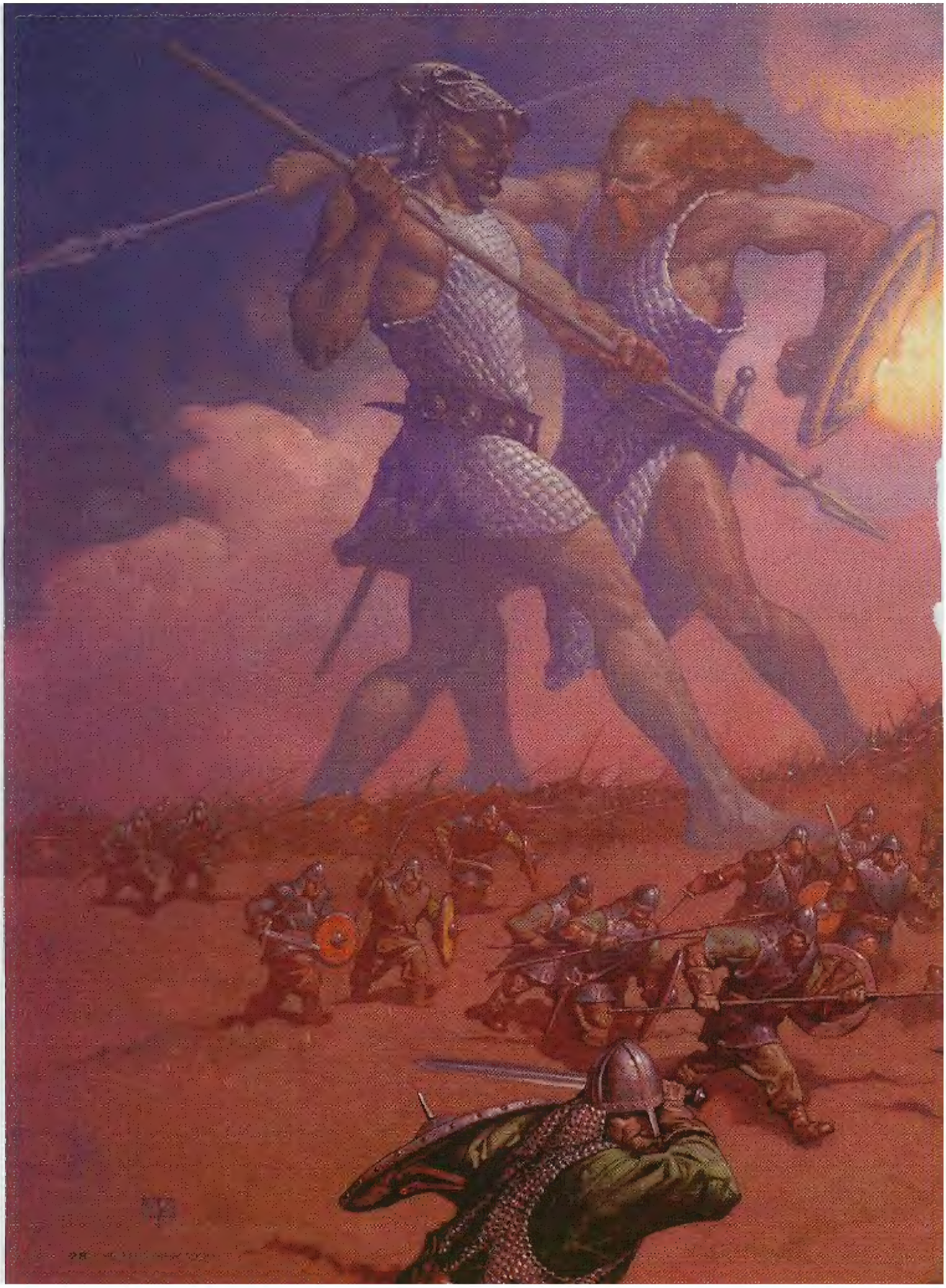

Hearth & Sword

Deities of the Dark Ages

The Dark Ages marked a transition in the religious practices of the people of the British Isles. The Romans occupied most of Britain for nearly four centuries. Under their reign, the British peoples saw their ancient gods replaced, first by the deities of their Roman masters, then by the wave of Christianity that swept through the Empire. Even the regions that remained largely free of Roman influence—such as Ireland and Wales—began to follow their own brand of this new faith under the auspices of such luminaries as Saints Columba and David.

by Ian Malcomson

illustrated by Mark Zug

When the Anglo-Saxons invaded Britain in the mid-fifth century, a second battle of faiths ensued. As the great Anglo-Saxon kingdoms were established, the race between Roman and Celtic missionaries began. For their part, the priests of the Anglo-Saxon gods fought hard for the survival of their faith, and conflicting religions soon engendered war.

It was a war that the old gods were to lose. By the middle of the seventh century, they had all but vanished, leaving only the two Christian churches to continue the battle for supremacy. With the Synod of Whitby in 664 A.D., the Roman church once again gained control.

Roleplaying opportunities involving the religious situation of Britain in the early Dark Ages are plentiful. Missionaries of both Christian churches often worked with the people they were attempting to convert, providing opportunities to have priests of opposing faiths working in the same party. Even after Christianity was established within Anglo-Saxon culture, many pagan beliefs still held, leading Christian priests to find methods to deal with conflicting ideologies within their own congregations. In some regions, instead of ousting the old gods, Christianity merely drove them underground, providing even more frustrations for priests of either faction (and, of course, more plot devices for DMs to draw upon).

Disclaimer: Although much of this material is based on accepted historical fact, certain changes and assumptions have been made by the author to better integrate the material with the AD&D® game. In addition, information pertaining to religion presents a fantasy translation of the faiths of the Anglo-Saxon period and should not be taken as canon. The views expressed by the author are meant to provide the reader with a game resource for the period covered and should not be taken as commentary on any real-life religion, whether historical or modern.

The Anglo-Saxon Pantheon

Many of the gods worshiped by the Anglo-Saxons resemble those later worshiped by the Vikings and other Scandinavian people, and with good reason. Both groups originated within the same tribal group. The familiar Viking pantheon (presented in *Legends and Lore*) is, in essence, the pantheon of the Anglo-Saxons with about four centuries of development behind it.

The Anglo-Saxon deities, however, have a matriarchal organization. Their greatest deities were females. In addition, the primary Anglo-Saxon deities had influence over fertility and the life-death cycle, rather than battle and war.

The following pantheon is drawn from many different sources. As with the ancient Celtic deities, pinning down a comprehensive pantheon for the pagan Anglo-Saxons is not easy. Most authors of the period were Christian scholars and monks, their works obviously biased toward their own faith. This pantheon is thus a combination of existing records regarding both the Anglo-Saxon invaders of Britain and the Germanic tribes of Europe from which they originated.

Nerthus

(The Harvest Queen, The Earth Mother)
Greater power of the Prime Material, NG

Portfolio: Fertility, the earth
Symbol: Wheat sheaf or corn dolly
Worshipers' Alignment: Any

Nerthus is the chief deity of the Anglo-Saxon pantheon. She is responsible for the well-being of all creatures. Before almost any activity, the Anglo-Saxons invoke her name to guide them in their endeavors. In matters of war, it may be Thunor and Tir to which warriors pray for strength, but it is to Nerthus they turn to keep them safe from harm on the battlefield.

Nerthus is a benign deity, answering the calls of her people for good harvests and protection from ills. She is not omnipresent and omnipotent, however—the actions of Hred, Woden, and Thunor conspire against her protections, causing strife among her people where she would have none.

Nerthus' Avatar (Ranger 15, Cleric 25)

Nerthus appears as a wise woman of middle years. She disdains finery, dressing in the colors of her chestnut hair and hazel eyes. In her arms she carries the wheat-sheaf that is her symbol, even during the depths of winter. To the mortal eye, she appears dreamlike, often leaving the viewer, in retrospect, unsure whether the vision was real or imagined.

AC –4; MV 15; hp 250; THAC0 3; #AT 1; Dmg special (see below); MR 100%; SZ M; Str 15, Dex 20, Con 22, Int 25, Wis 25, Cha 25.

Spells P: 13/12/12/12/12/11/5
Saves PPDM 1, RSW 3, PP 2, BW 3, Sp 3

Special Att/Def: It is rare that Nerthus attacks, instead preferring to use her spells to *charm* or otherwise neutralize any who would oppose her. When she does attack, she can do so at any range, without seeming to act at all. The effects of this attack cause the target to make a saving throw vs. spell with a –6 penalty or fall into a deep sleep from which the target cannot be awakened for up to one year.

In addition, Nerthus can cause any individual to be rooted to the spot and, if she desires, transform the victim into any form of plant life. There is no saving throw against this effect. Any individual affected by this power enters a form of stasis, remaining alive without the need for nourishment indefinitely. While in stasis, whether in plant or their own form, victims can communicate only telepathically (if possible), and only then if the communication is instigated by some outside force. (A wizard may communicate with a victim of Nerthus through the use of *ESP*, for example.) Flowers that bloom out of season, or in the depths of the winter months, are often regarded as victims of Nerthus.

Weapons of +3 enchantment or better are required to harm Nerthus' avatar.

Other Manifestations

In addition to humanoid form, Nerthus can manifest in the form of any plant. Such plants are always exceptional (the most magnificent oak, the most beautiful primrose, and so on).

The Church

Clergy: Speciality priests only (either her own, or those of the Anglo-Saxon pantheon as a whole)

Clergy's Alignment: Any good

Turn Undead: No

Command Undead: No

Priests of Nerthus are the most commonly encountered speciality priests of Anglo-Saxon culture, aside from those who serve the pantheon as a whole. Their duties include presiding over marriages and births, blessing the plowing and harvesting, and providing Nerthus' wisdom to the people of their community. They are very much community based, rarely wandering or adventuring.

Dogma: The community and the protection thereof are of paramount importance. Priests of Nerthus work to prevent harm to their people, and they counsel against unnecessary battle and see that proper rites are observed to ensure a good harvest and the health of livestock.

Day-to-Day Activities: Blessing of newborns, presiding over marriages, and blessing herds and fields provide the bulk of the day-to-day activities of Nerthus' priests. In times of war, they also involve themselves in the organization of the fyrd (army) and its deployment, promoting only conflicts that are absolutely necessary for the protection of the community.

Holy Days/Important Ceremonies: The month of Sol-monath (February) heralds the beginning of plowing and planting. To ensure a good harvest, special loaves of bread are placed within the freshly plowed furrows after being dedicated to Nerthus. This ceremony to Nerthus is second only to that taking place in Halig-monath (September). In this holy month, all weapons and armor are shut away within the community. A covered wagon, drawn by cows, is brought into the center of the community by Nerthus' priests. While the wagon remains within the village, feasts and other celebrations to Nerthus dominate the community. Eventually, the priests lead the wagon away to a ritual place of bathing. There, the occupant of the wagon (said to be Nerthus herself) is washed by slaves. At the end of the ceremony, the slaves are sacrificed by drowning, for no mortal may touch the goddess and remain alive.

In addition, along with Mannus and Ing, Nerthus is revered on the festival of Modranect, Mother's Night, the beginning of the Anglo-Saxon year when vows are made and renewed.

Priestly Vestments: Priests of Nerthus are not given to gaudy costumes. Like the image of their

The Anglo-Saxon Year

The year begins with the Yule-tide feasts (Modranect, or Mother's Night), in which warriors make their vows for the coming year. As well as celebrating Midwinter, Modranect also marks the birth of Ing, child of Mannus and Nerthus.

The year itself is split into two seasons (summer and winter), each divided into six moon-lives (months, or monaths). Two of the biggest ceremonies of the year mark the seasons: Lida (Midsummer) and Geola (Yule, in Midwinter). Such is the import of these ceremonies that they had fore-guard and rear-guard moons: Aerra Lida and Aeftera Lida (the moons before and after Lida), and Aerra Geola and Aeftera Gelna (those before and after Geola).

The moon after Aeftera Geola, February in our modern terms, was named Sol-monath, or "month of mud." In this moon, during which plowing began, the Anglo-Saxons offered Nerthus loaves, placed in the furrows, to inspire the great Harvest Queen to provide a bountiful crop later in the year.

Next came Hred-monath, the month of Hred, in which sacrifices were made to the goddess Hred, the Snow Maiden, for deliverance from the claws of winter.

Eostre-monath, the month of Eostre, comes next. This month was marked by celebrations of new life and re-birth.

The fifth month was known as Thri-milce, or the time of three milkings because, as Bede chronicles, milk-cows were so abundant in this month that they had to be milked three times a day.

The Midsummer festival consists of the building of bonfires and the burning of sacrifices to the gods.

August was Weod-monath, or "weed month," because of the growth of crops at this time.

Halig-monath ("holy month") is another time Nerthus is revered.

The first full moon in Winterfylleth marks the beginning of winter. The following moon is that of winter livestock slaughter, much of which was sacrificed to the gods. Thus, this moon is known as Blot-monath (Blood Month).

Julian Equivalents

Modranect	→	(Mother's Night)
Aeftera Geola	→	January
Sol-monath	→	February
Hred-monath	→	March
Eostre-monath	→	April
Thri-milce	→	May
Aerra Lida	→	June
Lida	→	(Midsummer festival)
Aeftera Lida	→	July
Weod-monath	→	August
Halig-monath	→	September
Winterfylleth	→	October
Blot-monath	→	November
Aerra Geola	→	December
Geola	→	(Midwinter festival)

diety, they wear simple brown. To show their wisdom, they let their hair (including beards) grow long. They often wear corn dollies as bracelets or sew them onto their robes.

Adventuring Garb: Priests of Nerthus rarely leave their communities. When they do travel, they retain their simple garb, confident in the protection their goddess provides them.

Speciality Priests

Requirements: Wis 14, Cha 15

Prime Requisites: Wisdom, Charisma

Alignment: Any good

Weapons: Staff. Priests of Nerthus may carry a scramasax (dagger) for general use and protection, but they may not gain proficiency with it.

Armor: None

Major Spheres: All, Animal, Charm, Creation, Elemental Earth, Guardian, Healing, Necromantic (beneficial spells only), Plant, Protection, Weather

Minor Spheres: Divination, Elemental Air, Elemental Water, Sun, Wards

Magical Items: Same as clerics, except barred from using fire-based items (except those that guard against fire) and items of destructive power.

Required Proficiencies: Dancing, Herbalism

Bonus Proficiencies: Agriculture, Animal Handling

~ A priest of Nerthus can identify poisonous plants on sight. From 2nd level, they can *detect poison* within any item.

~ Also at 2nd level, they gain the ability to calm animals, identical to that of a ranger of one level lower.

~ From 3rd level, priests of Nerthus may cast a *sleep* spell three times per day.

~ At 5th level, Nerthus' priests gain the ability to cast *charm person* once per day.

~ From 10th level, any *charm*-based spell cast by the priest carries a –2 saving throw penalty (in addition to any other penalty in place) and affects twice the standard number of targets. Against animal or plant-based targets, no saving throw is applicable.

Nerthus' Spells

Slumber of Nerthus

(Enchantment/Charm)
Level: 4
Sphere: Charm
Range: 10' plus 1' per level
Components: V, M
Duration: 5d6 days (see below)
Casting Time: 4
Area of Effect: One individual
Saving Throw: None

This spell allows the priest to cause the target to fall into a deep slumber. For the duration of the spell, the target remains unaware of the surroundings and cannot be roused except through the lifting of the enchantment by a priest of Nerthus, or through the dispelling or other disruption of the spell.

The spell duration is a maximum of 5d6 days. The priest may state the specific duration of the spell, up to the maximum rolled.

Note that priests of Nerthus may not use this spell to render an opponent unconscious for the purpose of an easy kill. Their doctrine tells them that recipients of this spell fall under the protection of Nerthus and that they are receiving life-guidance from the wisdom of their goddess while unconscious.

Although the spell has no saving throw, elves and half-elves retain their natural resistance to *charm*-based spells against the effects of the *slumber of Nerthus*.

Eostre

(Life-Mother, Goddess of the Dawn)
Intermediate power of the Prime Material, LG

Portfolio: Life and rebirth

Symbol: The hare

Worshipers' Alignment: Any good

Eostre is the companion of Nerthus. She is responsible for the maintenance of the life-death cycles of nature, and the births of all creatures fall under her protection. Although Eostre is not the guardian of the community, she is nonetheless highly revered within it.

As the Life-Mother and guardian of the sacred cycle, Eostre opposes any action that causes death outside the natural order. Thus, she and her clergy find themselves at odds with the faithful of Hreda and Thunor. Unlike Nerthus, Eostre views no battle as necessary.

Eostre's Avatar (Cleric 20)

Eostre appears as a beautiful, golden-haired female of girlish or matronly appearance. She smiles almost constantly, with only the knowledge of another life pointlessly lost causing a shadow to mar her visage.

Even on barren ground, flowers grow and prosper wherever the goddess has stepped.

AC –3; MV 24; hp 192; THAC0 4; #AT 1; Dmg paralysis (see below); MR 80%; SZ M; Str 13, Dex 24, Con 20, Int 23, Wis 24, Cha 25

Spells P: 13/12/12/11/10/7/2

Saves PPDM 3, RSW 4, PP 3, BW 4, Sp 4

Special Att/Def: Eostre attacks with a paralyzing touch. This attack causes no damage, but the victim becomes affected as if the target of a *hold person* spell, with no saving throw applicable. The paralysis lasts for any length of time Eostre desires, up to 1 month.

Eostre may also cause the growth of plants, with effects equal to a double-strength *entangle* spell. Finally, she may summon 10–100 hares which, although not effective in direct combat, swarm around the feet of those opposing the goddess, causing them to lose their footing and concentration—often in highly amusing (for Eostre) ways.

Only weapons of +2 or better enchantment can harm Eostre's avatar.

Other Manifestations

Eostre might manifest in the form of any female creature. She occasionally appears as a matronly cow within a herd during calving, or as a lapwing or hare during the spring season.

The Church

Clergy: Speciality priests only (either her own, or those of the Anglo-Saxon pantheon as a whole)

Clergy's Alignment: Any good, usually lawful

Turn Undead: Yes, with an extra 1d6 hit dice affected

Command Undead: No

Eostre's priests are often midwives of both human and animal births. Every community has at least one individual devoted to Eostre, even if he or she is not a priest. Although birthing ceremonies are presided over by Nerthus' clergy, it is Eostre's faithful who actually deliver the child, often using their granted powers to ensure a smooth transition of the newly born from womb to world.

The vast majority of Eostre's clergy are female.

Dogma: Life is sacred. Priests of Eostre exist to bring life into the world, not to remove it. Even the accidental squashing of a bug brings pangs of regret to a follower of the Life-Mother.

Priests of Eostre help bring new life into the world, and then they help preserve it.

Day-to-Day Activities: Obviously, midwifery is the major activity of Eostre's faithful. When there is no call for this primary function, they involve themselves in the protest against battle and the unnecessary loss of life this causes, as well as in the raising and education of the children of their community.

Holy Days/Important Ceremonies: Eostre-monath (April), marked by the celebrations of the new life brought by spring, is sacred to Eostre. During this time, eggs are painted and given as gifts to be either eaten or kept as reminders of Eostre's presence. During the Dark Ages, the similarity of the lapwing's ground nest and the hare's scratch, both very much present during Eostre-monath, led many to believe that hares laid eggs. Many of the celebrations of life that took place during this part of the year were later adopted by the Christian church as the Easter celebration.

Priestly Vestments: Simple white robes. Eostre's priests often carry a tin, pewter, or wood likeness of a hare to symbolize their devotion.

Adventuring Garb: The same white robes worn during their day-to-day activities. Priests of Eostre always travel unarmed.

Speciality Priests

Requirements: Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 12

Prime Requisites: Intelligence, Wisdom

Alignment: Lawful good

Weapons: None. Priests of Eostre are barred from gaining proficiency in and carrying weapons.

Armor: None

Major Spheres: All, Animal, Guardian, Healing, Necromantic (beneficial spells only), Protection

Minor Spheres: Charm, Creation, Divination, Elemental Water (Note: Priests of Eostre may not cast spells that inflict damage or cause death or disease.)

Magical Items: Same as clerics, except no magical item that causes damage may be used. Multi-function items with both harmful and non-harmful effects may be used, but the harmful effects may not be utilized.

Required Proficiencies: Herbalism

Bonus Profsiciencies: Healing

- At 1st level, priests of Eostre must choose one type of creature (such as humans, cows, sheep, or horses) on which to focus their midwife skills. Midwifery operates on the roll of a Healing proficiency, with a roll of 20 indicating that complications have occurred in the birth that may (20% chance) result in the newborn's death. Every two levels thereafter, priests add another type of creature to their list of those they can successfully deliver.
- From 3rd level, Eostre's priests may cast *hold person* once per day for every three levels attained.
- At 5th level, a priest may communicate with hares, as per the *speak with animals* spell. They may also employ hares

to perform simple tasks for them (collecting healing herbs, carrying messages to other priests of Eostre, and so on).

- From 8th level, the chance that a newborn will die as a result of a birthing complication is reduced to 5%.

Eostre's Spells

Midwifery

(Necromantic)
Level: 3
Sphere: Healing
Range: Touch
Components: V, M, S
Duration: 1 round
Casting Time: 1
Area of Effect: One mother and child engaged in childbirth
Saving Throw: None

By casting this spell upon the mother and child at the moment of childbirth, the priest ensures the child is born healthy and that no complications result in the birthing process. Through use of this spell, a priest of Eostre does not need to make the normal Healing check for midwifery purposes.

The spell can also be used to alleviate complications that arise during a birthing. The spell must be cast immediately once the priest is aware of such a complication, such as the round following a roll of 20 on a Midwifery/Healing roll. Use of the spell in this manner removes the complication, but it does not ensure that the rest of the birthing process goes smoothly. In effect, the priest gains a second chance to make a successful Healing proficiency check. Of course, a second casting of the spell negates the need for this roll.

Lifegiving

(Necromantic)
Level: 6
Sphere: Healing
Range: Touch
Components: V, S
Duration: 24 hours (or permanent; see below)
Casting Time: 2
Area of Effect: One individual
Saving Throw: None

This spell affects an injured, diseased, or otherwise harmed individual in the same manner as if he or she had received the benefits of a *heal* spell.

If cast on a healthy target, the spell preserves the target's life for a duration of 24 hours. During this period, the spell may counter *one* of the following harms: poison, disease, curses, death by injury, or the effects of *harm* and *slay living* spells. Note that *lifegiving* does not protect against a *destruction* spell.

The *lifegiving* spell protects against death by binding the individual's spirit to the body. When mortally harmed, the individual collapses, stops breathing, and is—for all intents and purposes—dead. A *detect life* spell or a priest of Eostre can recognize certain signs that say otherwise. As long as the individual's hit-point total is raised above zero through magical healing or with the use of a Healing proficiency check made by a priest of Eostre before the duration expires, death does not actually occur and the victim awakens. Of course, causing extensive bodily harm to the target might make it impossible for the hit-point deficit to be recovered.

Hred

(Snow Maiden)
Intermediate power of the Prime Material, LE

Portfolio: Winter, cold
Symbol: An inverted spear head of cold iron
Worshipers' Alignment: Any

Hred is the bringer of the snows and frosts, the final slayer of the new life that arose in the spring. She is a malevolent goddess, killing without mercy during winter. She is the antithesis of Eostre, representing the end of the life-death cycle while the latter presides over its beginning. Of all the Anglo-Saxon deities, only Woden maintains any kind of relationship with Hred, for she presides over the portion of the year in which magical power is at its strongest.

Hred's Avatar

(Cleric 20, Wizard 18, Thief 20)

Hred appears as a pale-faced woman of advanced years. Her hair is whiter than snow, and the piercing blue of her eyes can freeze a man's heart. She dresses in robes seemingly made of purest ice, but she also occasionally appears draped in the hides of the wolves that are her servants. Rarely is Hred seen without her companion, a huge winter wolf of double hit dice and maximum hit points. In her left hand, Hred carries a long *spear +4* crafted entirely from cold iron.

AC −6; MV 24; hp 190; THAC0 4; #AT 2; Dmg 1d10+10 (Strength bonus), +4 (weapon bonus), plus special; MR 75%, and see below; SZ M; Str 22, Dex 20, Con 25, Int 20, Wis 20, Cha 19.

Spells P: 12/12/11/10/7/5/3; W: 5/ 5/5/5/5/4/3/3/2
Saves PPDM 4, RSW 4, PP 4, BW 4, Sp 3

Special Att/Def: Hred can attack twice in a single round with her spear. In addition to the damage this weapon inflicts, it requires the victim to make a successful saving throw vs. spell at a −4 penalty or become totally numbed with cold. Numbed victims cannot act for 2d6 turns and lose 1d8 hit points per round due to magical frostbite. Such is the intensity of this cold that even creatures normally immune to cold attacks are affected, although they are numbed for only 1d6 turns and suffer only 1d2 points of damage per round. This numbing effect automatically affects anyone who dares grasp her spear.

Any cold-based spells cast by Hred have twice the normal duration and inflict double damage.

Hred may summon 2d12 wolves to aid her at any time. These wolves appear within 1d6 rounds and are of the largest size with maximum hit points.

The Snow Maiden is completely immune to cold-based attacks, including the effects of her spear.

Weapons of +2 or greater enchantment are required to strike Hred's avatar.

Other Manifestations

Hred might also appear as a gigantic white wolf or a blistering snowstorm. In wolf form, she can strike with both claws for 1d6+10 points of damage and may breathe upon a single target once per round; her breath has the same numbing effect as her spear. In snowstorm form, she affects all within the area with her numbing attack but can cause no other direct damage.

The Church

Clergy: Speciality priests only, of either Hred or the Anglo-Saxon pantheon

Clergy's Alignment: Any evil

Turn Undead: No

Command Undead: No

Although the Anglo-Saxons pray to Hred for deliverance from the fury of winter, dedicated followers of the Snow Maiden are rare. Those faithful few tend to be loners of the wilderness, often named ice witches by the communities that suffer their neighborly attentions.

Dogma: The cold of winter is sacred, and lives claimed by it belong to Hred. The ultimate goal of Hred and her minions is to return the world to an eternal winter (Ice Age).

Day-to-Day Activities: The Snow Maiden's servants have few daily duties other than the constant search for the return of eternal winter. During winter, all speciality priests of the Anglo-Saxon pantheon must perform an animal sacrifice at least once per week and must engage in prayer to Hred each evening to protect their community from the deathly cold of winter nights.

Holy Days/Important Ceremonies: Hred-monath (March) is sacred to Hred, and at this time Hred's faithful pray for the coming of the next winter. Others celebrate the deliverance from the winter just ended, sending prayers to Hred in thanks for their survival.

Priestly Vestments: Robes of white, often trimmed with wolf fur. Decorative jewelry of iron is also worn, engraved with or fashioned in the form of Hred's symbol.

Adventuring Garb: Armor of iron, or hide or leather armor reinforced with iron, worn beneath white cloth or wolf-fur robes or cloaks. Iron spears are always carried.

Speciality Priests

Requirements: Con 12, Wis 9

Prime Requisites: Constitution, Wisdom

Alignment: Any evil

Weapons: Any non-bludgeoning weapon, but proficiency in spear must be taken before any other

Armor: Any iron or iron reinforced armor (for example, iron chain mail or iron-studded leather armor)

Major Spheres: All, Elemental Water, Elemental Air, Healing (reverse only), Protection, Sun (reverse only), Weather

Minor Spheres: Combat, Divination, Necromantic

Magical Items: As per cleric. However, no item that uses heat or fire may be used.

Required Proficiencies: Survival, Weather Sense

Bonus Proficiencies: None

- All cold-based spells are cast with one parameter at double strength (e.g., double range, double damage, double number of targets, or double area of effect).
- Speciality priests of Hred receive a +1 bonus to saving throws vs. cold-based attacks, and such attacks cause –1 point of damage per die.
- Speciality priests of Hred can use the following wizard spells, following the rules for priest spell memorization and casting: 1st level: *chill touch;* 2nd level: *ice knife;* 4th level: *ice storm, wall of ice;* 5th level: *cone of cold;* 6th level: *Otiluke's freezing sphere.*
- From 5th-level, priests of Hred are immune to natural cold-based attacks.
- From 8th-level, priests of Hred are immune to magical cold-based attacks.

Hred's Spells

Hred's Touch

(Abjuration)
Level: 3
Sphere: Elemental water
Range: Touch
Components: V, S
Duration: 1d6 rounds + 1 round per level
Casting Time: 2
Area of Effect: One target
Saving Throw: Neg.

A victim touched by the caster of this spell (requires an attack roll) must make a successful saving throw vs. spell or become afflicted with a numbing cold. Numbed victims cannot act other than to drop to the ground in a shivering fit. In addition, the intensity of the effects of the touch inflict 1d4 points of cold damage per round, excluding the initial round in which the victim was touched. Creatures immune to cold-based attacks are not affected by this spell.

Flesh to Ice

(Alteration) Reversible
Level: 6
Sphere: Elemental water
Range: 5 yards/level
Components: V, S, M
Duration: Permanent
Casting Time: 6
Area of Effect: One creature
Saving Throw: Special

Through use of this spell, a priest can change any type of flesh into ice. Carried and worn possessions of the target are likewise turned into ice. Creatures turned to ice form are subject to the normal durability of ice. If in a warm location, for example, they begin to melt. A creature returned to flesh after suffering damage in ice form might have deformities or wounds reflecting such damage. A victim in ice form is inert, possessing no awareness, and no form of communication can contact them. The material component for this spell is a small piece of ice or natural glass. If glass is used in place of ice, the victim receives a +4 bonus to the saving throw. The component is consumed during casting.

The reverse of this spell, *ice to flesh*, can be cast only on a

creature that has been affected by a *flesh to ice* spell. (It cannot be used to transform normal ice into flesh.) The spell restores the victim to his or her normal condition. Upon returning to flesh form, the victim must make a successful System Shock roll to survive the transmutation. This spell might be granted to priests other than those of Hred, as long as they have major access to the Elemental Water sphere. The material component for this spell is a piece of earth and a single possession of the recipient. Both components are consumed during casting.

Mannus

(Father of Man)

Lesser power of the Prime Material, N

Portfolio: Humans

Symbol: A spear, point upward, with a shaft of oak. Also, the first rune of the futhark (Man).

Worshipers' Alignment: Any

Mannus is the consort of Nerthus. The first humans were the children of Mannus and Nerthus; Mannus provided their shape and attitude, and Nerthus breathed life into them. His interests lie solely with the development of his children, constantly requiring them to test and prove themselves through their achievements. In this, he is a neutral arbiter—those who succeed and surpass their fellows might receive his blessing; those who do not are ignored and denied his protection. He is thus a major impetus for the development and betterment of men, as his children strive to retain the good will of their father.

Mannus' Avatar (Fighter 25, Cleric 20)

Mannus appears as a wandering scholar and tutor or as a warrior of kingly bearing. In his scholar form, he occasionally singles out humans of achievement, providing them with counsel and tutelage. As a warrior, he might manifest within the fyrd (army) of one he favors, aiding them against foes who have lost his blessing. Through his interference, kings and kingdoms may fall, to be replaced by those he sees fit to rule instead.

In scholar form, he carries an oaken *staff* +3 and wears simple brown robes. In warrior form, he carries a long *spear* +3 and wears a chain hauberk and the closed-face helm worn by kings.

AC –4 (robes) or –8 (hauberk); MV 15; hp 210; THAC0 5; #AT 5/2; Dmg 1d6+14; MR 50%; SZ M; Str 23, Dex 20, Con 20, Int 19, Wis 18, Cha 23.

Spells P: 11/11/10/9/7/5/2

Saves PPDM 5, RSW 5, PP 5, BW 5, Sp 5

Special Att/Def: In scholar form, any individual who receives Mannus's tutelage, even in a brief encounter, receives sufficient experience points to achieve the next level. If Mannus appears within a fyrd in warrior form, all members of that unit are affected by a triple-strength *bless* spell (+3 to all attacks, saving throws, and morale checks), while their opponents are affected as if by a triple-strength *curse* spell. In addition, any opponent facing Mannus himself, if that opponent is currently out of favor with the deity, finds things going horribly wrong. The victim receives no Dexterity nor shield benefits to Armor Class. Also, should the victim miss an attack roll against the god, the victim drops any held weapons. Additionally, other unlucky events might befall the unfortunate, subject to the DM's judgment. Examples include tripping and falling in the mud of the battlefield, a slipped helm rendering the victim unable to see, and so forth.

Other Manifestations

Mannus occasionally manifests in the form of an owl, circling above a field of battle. In this form, he may bestow his *bless* and *curse* effects (as above) on the warriors below, but he may participate in the battle in no other way.

The Church

Clergy: Speciality priests of Mannus or of the Anglo-Saxon pantheon

Clergy's Alignment: Any

Turn Undead: No

Command Undead: No

Mannus' clergy are the inspirational personages within their community. They advise people to further their goals and improve their standards of living. This occasionally puts them at odds with the clergies of Nerthus and Eostre, especially when the goals they promote involve instigating war. Mannus' faithful always command great respect within their communities.

Dogma: People are not perfect but must constantly strive to be so. Those given to complacency or sloth are cursed in the eyes of their god.

Day-to-Day Activities: Driving themselves and their communities to better and bolder achievements fills most of Mannus' worshipers' time. They teach their people to set higher and higher goals for themselves, preaching that Mannus guides and protects only those who aim the highest.

Holy Days/Important Ceremonies: Modranect, the new year festival, is presided over by Mannus' clergy as vows and promises are taken by the community for their achievements in the coming year.

Priestly Vestments: Within their community, Mannus' faithful dress after the fashion of their god's scholar form, in simple brown robes.

Adventuring Garb: Although not limited in armor choice, priests of Mannus often wear a chain hauberk, after the fashion of the warrior manifestation of the deity. They always carry spears.

Speciality Priests

Requirements: Wis 9, Cha 10

Prime Requisite: Wisdom

Alignment: Any

Weapons: Any, but must take proficiency in spear first

Armor: Any (chain hauberk preferred)

Major Spheres: All, Combat, Creation, Guardian, Protection

Minor Spheres: Charm, War

Magical Items: As per standard cleric

Required Proficiencies: None

Bonus Proficiencies: None

A priest of Mannus may not possess a nonweapon proficiency with a target number lower than 14. If the relevant ability, with its check modifier, provides a target of less

than 14, the priest must spend enough slots to raise the target to 14 or more.

- From 3rd level, a priest may instantly know the current standing of any individual as viewed in the eyes of Mannus.
- Also from 3rd level, any spell cast against an individual out of favor with Mannus carries a –1 saving throw penalty, if applicable.
- From 5th level, a priest may use a special *bless* spell that provides a +2 bonus. Only those in favor with Mannus can receive this benefit. The power is usable once per day for every 5 levels attained. In all other respects, the power is equal to the standard *bless* spell.
- At 8th level and above, all beneficial spells cast by a priest of Mannus upon one favored by the god are at double potency. This affects any bonus due, but does not affect range, duration, and so on. For example, a *protection from evil* spell yields a –4 penalty to evil creatures' attack rolls and a +4 bonus to saving throws vs. their attacks.
- From 12th level, a priest may bring his or her deity's attention to any individual worthy of special attention, either positively or negatively. Whether the subject actually receives favor from Mannus is subject to DM judgment.

Woden keeps his own counsel and serves only himself.

Woden

(Master of Magic)

Lesser power of the Prime Material, N

Portfolio: Magic, knowledge, guardian of the dead

Symbol: A blank runestone; the crow and the raven

Worshipers' Alignment: Any

Woden is the god of magical wisdom, learning, and knowledge. He is also the guardian of the souls of the dead. It was Woden who revealed the uses of runes to mortal men, himself having suffered arduous tests to gain the knowledge. Thus, the runic alphabet of the Anglo-Saxons, the futhark, is sacred to him.

Woden is a deity of true neutrality. Everything he does serves his own schemes in some way. In this respect, he is often at odds with Mannus.

Britons and Celts sometimes mistake Woden with their old deity, Cernunnos, the leader of the Wild Hunt. In later centuries, Woden evolved within the northern European Germanic faith into the god Odin.

Woden's Avatar (Wizard 30; Rogue 20)

Woden appears as a tall, rugged man. He dresses in weather-beaten clothing of leather and coarse fabric. He wears a tall, battered, wide-brimmed, conical, black hat adorned with the feathers of ravens. Crow and raven feathers also decorate the shoulders and upper back of his long, threadbare cloak. His straight hair is raven-black, and though he has no beard, he appears unshaven. Woden's avatar has but one eye, his right eye bearing scars from the attack of a large bird.

Woden always travels with a *quarterstaff* +2 engraved with the twenty-four runes of the futhark in winding patterns along its length.

AC –6; MV 24; hp 180; THAC0 7; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6+9; MR 100%; SZ M; Str 19, Dex 22, Con 20, Int 25, Wis 20, Cha 19.

Spells W: 7/7/7/7/7/7/7/6/6

Saves PPDM 3, RSW 3, PP 4, BW 3, Sp 2

Special Att/Def: If the runemaster kit (presented in *DRAGON® Magazine* issue #257) is available, Woden operates as a wizard under the benefits and restrictions of that kit. He has knowledge of all wizard spells, even those newly created by mortal practitioners of magic.

Each of the twenty-four runes engraved upon his staff has a particular effect that Woden may call upon at any time, one

effect per round, as long as he is wielding the item. The effects are:

- Man (Self): *shape change*
- Gyfu (Partnership): *charm person* and *charm monsters*
- Os (Signals): *clairvoyance* and *clairaudience*
- Ethel (Separation): *repulsion*
- Ur (Strength): *strength*
- Peorth (Initiation): *dream*
- Nyth (Constraint): *slow*
- Ing (Fertility): *attraction*
- Eoh (Defense): *globe of invulnerability*
- Eolh-secg (Protection): *spell turning*
- Feoh (Possessions): *fabricate*
- Wyn (Joy): *Tasha's uncontrollable hideous laughter*
- Ger (Harvest): *plant growth*
- Cen (Opening): *passwall*
- Tir (Warrior): *Tenser's transmutation*
- Beorc (Growth): *enlarge*
- Eh (Movement): *fly*
- Lagu (Flow): *time stop*
- Haegl (Disruption): *Mordenkainen's disjunction*
- Rad (Journey): *teleport without error*
- Thorn (Gateway): *monster summoning VI*
- Daeg (Breakthrough): *foresight*
- Is (Standstill): *hold person* and *hold monster*
- Sigel (Wholeness): *mending*

All effects operate at the 30th level of magic use.

Other Manifestations

While traveling the earth in search of lore, Woden occasionally assumes the guise of a large, one-eyed crow or raven.

The Church

Clergy: Speciality priests of Woden or the Anglo-Saxon pantheon, wizards, runemasters

Clergy's Alignment: Any

Turn Undead: No

Command Undead: No

Unlike many other clergies, Woden's faithful rarely involve themselves in providing advice to their lords and communities. This is not to say they never provide advice, just that they wait until advice is asked for, in which case they usually ask for some form of payment.

Woden's priests are almost always loners, wrapped in their constant studies and lore-gathering exercises. It is not unusual for a community that is home to one of Woden's followers to be entirely unaware it has a priest, the individual in question being regarded as a mysterious hermit who disdains unwanted visitors.

Dogma: Knowledge is all-important, and any form of suffering is worth enduring to gain it. Magic is a sacred art form not to be wantonly abused.

Day-to-Day Activities: The gathering of lore is the single most important activity of Woden's clergy, and it is rare that they engage themselves in activities outside of this driving goal.

Holy Days/Important Ceremonies: Nights of the full moon are sacred to Woden, and during these times his faithful engage in celebrative acts of prayer. Such nights within winter months are especially holy. Out of respect for the guardian of the dead, special ceremonies to Woden are performed during burial rituals, asking him to keep the soul safe on its journey into the afterlife.

Priestly Vestments: Scholar's robes, often decorated with crow or raven feathers. Some also wear conical hats after the fashion of their deity.

Adventuring Garb: Normal traveling garb, again often decorated with crow or raven feathers. Brimmed, conical hats are also worn while abroad.

Speciality Priests

Requirements: Int 12, Wis 9

Prime Requisites: Intelligence, Wisdom

Alignment: Any neutral, non-lawful alignment

Weapons: Staff, scramasax (dagger), seax (short sword)

Armor: Leather or studded leather, preferably none.

Major Spheres: All, Animal, Charm, Creation, Divination, Elemental Air, Elemental Earth, Summoning, Travelers

Minor Spheres: Combat, Elemental Fire, Elemental Water

Magical Items: Any permitted for clerics or wizards

Required Proficiencies: Spellcraft

Bonus Proficiencies: Read/Write Futhark

- If the campaign employs the runemaster kit, Woden's priests can utilize rune magic, including the ability to cast the *scribe runes* spell.
- From 5th level, the priest may assume the form of a large crow or raven once per day.
- At 8th level, the priest loses the use of his or her right eye (usually due to the attack of a raven). The lost eye cannot be recovered, even through the use of the *regenerate* spell or similar magic. The priest's remaining eye gains special perception, allowing the use of *infravision*, *detect magic*, and *detect invisibility*, each usable three times per day.
- At 12th level, the priest's remaining eye gains the permanent ability of *true seeing*.
- From 15th level, a priest of Woden may scribe one rune per five experience levels attained upon his or her staff. These runes are permanent and can perform their functions at any time, one function per round, as long as the staff is being held. Possible runic functions include: any spell effect up to 4th level; +1 attack bonus; +1 damage bonus; –1 AC bonus; or +1 saving throw bonus toward any one category of saving throw. Multiple bonus runes of the same type may be scribed (for example, a 15th-level priest of Woden may scribe two +1 attack runes and one +1 damage rune, to provide a total bonus of +2 to hit and +1 damage).

Tir

(Lord Justice)

Lesser power of the Prime Material, LN

Portfolio: Glory and honor

Symbol: A round, iron-rimmed shield. Also, the fifteenth rune of the futhark (Tir)

Worshipers' Alignment: Any non-chaotic

Tir is the favored god of warriors, inspiring his followers to seek achievement on the battlefield. There is no greater death,

in the eyes of Tir, than that in honorable combat. Tir is also the lord of justice, and it is his wisdom that kings draw upon when judgments must be made.

Tir is companion to Mannus, Ing, and Thunor. His role as a promoter of war, even though he does not promote it for its own sake, leaves him at odds with Nerthus and Eostre.

In the later Scandinavian pantheon, Tir appears as the one-handed god Tyr.

Tir's Avatar (Fighter 25)

Tir appears as a tall, proud warrior-king with flowing dark blonde hair and beard. His hazel irises are circled with rings the color of steel. He wears a chain hauberk of the finest quality, and often hides his noble features behind the full-faced helm of kings.

Tir possesses a *spear +3* that has the ability to slay (as per an *arrow of slaying*) opponents of chaotic alignment. Additionally, he carries a *seax* (short sword) *of sharpness +3*. He normally wields only his spear in combat but occasionally uses his seax or, rarely, both weapons in combination.

AC –8; MV 15; hp 212; THAC0 2; #AT 2 or 4 (2 attacks per round with each weapon wielded); Dmg 1d6+13; MR 40%; SZ M; Str 22, Dex 20, Con 23, Int 19, Wis 20, Cha 19.

Spells None

Saves PPDM 5, RSW 5, PP 4, BW 5, Sp 5

Special Att/Def: Tir is immune to any form of deception, mundane or magical.

Other Manifestations

In matters of mortal justice, Tir occasionally manifests as a seax, appearing from thin air in the hall of judgement to embed itself in the wood of the bench before the guilty party.

The Church

Clergy: Speciality priests of Tir or the Anglo-Saxon pantheon

Clergy's Alignment: Lawful neutral or lawful good

Turn Undead: No

Command Undead: No

Tir's clergy count themselves among the thegns and eoldermen of the king's court. Thus, they are always part of the professional military. They advise their lords in matters of war, often promoting a strategy that, while tactically sound, has been designed more to reap glory and honor for the members of the fyrd than to defeat the enemy effectively.

Dogma: The death of a man lies on the battlefield. Thus, the sickening and dying should be permitted to ride with the fyrd to gain an honorable death.

Paramount to the structure of society is the existence and upholding of law and justice. Those who make a mockery of those tenets are cursed in the view of Tir.

Day-to-Day Activities: Advising the king and the witan (council of elders) on matters of war and justice.

Holy Days/Important Ceremonies: Tir's day (Tuesday) is the day of the week upon which Tir is honored. Priests of Tir also engage in prayer vigils before any major battle, to ask their god for the opportunity for the fyrd to gain honor and glory in the coming bloodshed.

Priestly Vestments: Priests of Tir dress in the manner befitting their station, whether thegn or eolderman. They often wear round disks inscribed with Tir's rune as pendants.

Adventuring Garb: Outside their communities, Tir's clergy adorn themselves as would any warrior of their station. They wear chain hauberks, and carry seaxes and spears. Many also carry a round, metal-rimmed shield decorated with Tir's rune.

Speciality Priests

Requirements: Str 9, Con 8, Wis 9

Prime Requisites: Strength, Wisdom

Alignment: Lawful neutral or lawful good

Weapons: Spear, seax, scramasax (dagger), bow (long or short), francisca (hand ax), sparte (hand ax), framea (light or medium lance)

Armor: Any

Major Spheres: All, Combat, Divination, Law, Protection, War

Minor Spheres: Guardian

Magical Items: Any permitted to either warriors or clerics

Required Proficiencies: None

Bonus Proficiencies: None

- Priests of Tir can cast *detect lie* once per day for every three levels gained.
- From 2nd level, a priest of Tir gains a +1 bonus to saving throws when disbelieving illusions.
- From 5th level, the priest does not need to attempt to disbelieve an illusion actively to gain a saving throw to do so.
- A priest of Tir of 10th level or higher, when sitting in a hall of judgment, can determine accurately the guilt of any brought before the hall.

Thunor

(The Warrior)

Lesser power of the Prime Material, CN

Portfolio: Might and strength

Symbol: The fyflot

Worshipers' Alignment: Any

Unlike Tir, Thunor doesn't represent such ideals as glory or honor. The pure act of war for its own sake is his domain. Thunor revels in war, urging his faithful to take up arms and prove themselves at every opportunity. In this, he is loathed by Nerthus and, especially, Eostre. For his part, he sees these dieties as cowards who would rather see men become weak and feeble. Although he is often in the company of Tir and Ing, even those deities balk at Thunor's brash, uncompromising call to arms.

In the Scandinavian pantheon, Thunor is synonymous with the god Thor.

Thunor's Avatar (Fighter 30)

Thunor appears as a huge man of wild features. His face is framed in a chaotic mass of blond hair that seems to writhe with a will of its own when the god is angered. His chain hauberk bulges over the muscular form it protects. In his right hand, he wields a mighty *spear +4*, forged from magical iron so dense that only one with Thunor's Strength may

wield it. Strapped to his left arm is a round iron *shield* +3 adorned with the fyflot that is his symbol. Again, only those of great strength may use this item.

AC –7; MV 15 fly 24; hp 225; THAC0 1; #AT 5/2; Dmg 2d6+18; MR 30%; SZ M; Str 25, Dex 19, Con 23, Int 17, Wis 14, Cha 18.

Spells None

Saves PPDM 5, RSW 5, PP 4, BW 5, Sp 6

Special Att/Def: Thunor may cast his spear up to a range of one mile. During its flight, the spear becomes a lightning bolt, striking for its standard damage plus 6d6 points of electrical damage. A saving throw vs. spell reduces the extra damage by half. The spear magically reappears in Thunor's hand 1 round later.

When angered, the fyflot adorning his shield bursts into flames. Thunor has no conscious control over this effect. Anyone within 30 feet of the burning shield suffers 2d8 points of heat damage per round. Anyone touching the shield suffers 4d6 points of fire damage.

Thunor may inspire a berserk battle rage in warriors. All warriors, friend or foe, within 60 feet of Thunor when he invokes this power must make a successful saving throw vs. spell at a –4 penalty, modified for Wisdom, or else become berserk for the remainder of the battle. The effects of becoming berserk are as described in the berserker kit (*Complete Fighter's Handbook*, page 20) and are summarized under *berserk inspiration*.

Other Manifestations

Lightning storms are a sign of Thunor's anger. During times of war, the sun is seen as the sign of Thunor's burning shield, appearing to inspire his faithful in the heat of battle.

The Church

Clergy: Speciality priests of Thunor and the Anglo-Saxon pantheon

Clergy's Alignment: Any non-lawful

Turn Undead: No

Command Undead: No

Like Tir's clergy, all of Thunor's faithful are thegns or eoldermen, part of the professional military. They are among the most militaristic of all warriors, pushing for war at every opportunity. Their prowess on the battlefield often accords them great reward and high station, making them closer to the king and more influential within the witan than those who offer sounder advice. The clergies of Thunor and Eostre are at constant odds.

Dogma: Battle is the beginning and end of everything. Concepts of honor are tools the weak use to hide their ineptitude. Talk is for cowardly fools.

Day-to-Day Activities: The clergy of Thunor are influential within the thegns of a kingdom and hold responsibility within the fyrd. During times of peace, they push for war. In times of war, they inspire greater and greater feats of battle prowess from the members of the fyrd.

Holy Days/Important Ceremonies: Thunor's Day (Thursday) is sacred to Thunor, and many battles are planned for that day for that reason.

Priestly Vestments: Priests of Thunor are rarely out of armor. They wear pendants fashioned in the form of the fyflot, or inscribed with the symbol of their god. The fyflot also appears on their shields.

Adventuring Garb: When abroad, the garb of Thunor's faithful differs little from the apparel worn at other times.

Speciality Priests

Requirements: Str 15, Wis 9

Prime Requisites: Strength, Wisdom

Alignment: Any non-lawful

Weapons: Any, but must take proficiency in spear before any other

Armor: Any, but Thunor's priests may not wear helms

Major Spheres: All, Combat, Elemental Air, Elemental Fire, Sun, War, Weather

Minor Spheres: Animal, Divination, Protection

Magical Items: Any normally usable by clerics or fighters

Required Proficiencies: Weather Sense

Bonus Proficiencies: None

- Priests of Thunor may possess exceptional Strength. They also gain a warrior's Constitution hit point adjustment.
- From 3rd level, priests of Thunor can go berserk, as the berserker kit ability described in *The Complete Fighter's Handbook*.
- From 4th level, a priest may cast a *lightning bolt* once per day. The damage inflicted by this bolt is equal to 1d6 points for every 2 levels attained by the priest (2d6 at 4th-level, 3d6 at 6th-level, and so on), to a maximum of 8d6.

Thunor's Spells

Berserk Inspiration

(Enchantment/Charm)
Level: 2
Sphere: Combat
Range: Special
Components: V
Duration: Special
Casting Time: 1 round
Area of Effect: Warriors within 30' radius
Saving Throw: Neg.

By casting this spell, a priest causes all warriors within range to be affected by a berserk rage. The targets must be able to hear the priest's words for the entire round of casting. They are entitled to a saving throw vs. spell, adjusting their rolls for any Wisdom bonus if applicable, to avoid the effects. The berserk rage lasts until the end of the current combat.

The effects of going berserk are described in *The Complete Fighter's Handbook*, pages 20 to 22, but are summarized here for convenience.

While berserk, the following effects apply:

- Immunity to *charm person, friends, hypnotism, sleep, irritation, ray of enfeeblement, scare, geas, command, charm person or mammal, enthrall, cloak of bravery*, and *symbol*.
- Gain a +4 saving throw bonus vs. *blindness, Tasha's uncontrollable hideous laughter, hold person, charm monster, confusion*, and *hold animal*.

- Immunity to the *emotion* spell, unless the *fear* effect is used, in which case a failed save indicates a lifting of the berserk rage (but no other *fear* effect).
- The effects of a *finger of death* spell, whether damage or actual death, do not apply until the berserk rage passes.
- The following spells do not affect a berserk character until he or she is free from the berserk rage: *bless*, all *cure wounds* spells, *aid*, *heal*, *regenerate*, *wither*.
- The *taunt* spell automatically affects a berserk character, who breaks off combat with the current opponent to attack the caster of the spell.
- Immunity to KO results through the Punching and Wrestling rules.
- Suffers only half damage from bare-handed attacks.
- A +1 bonus to hit, +3 bonus to damage, and +5 hit points.
- The DM, not the player, keeps track of damage scored against the character. The player's only guide to the damage his character receives is through the description of blows provided by the DM.
- No missile weapons may be used while berserk.
- Each opponent engaged must be fought until that opponent goes down. The berserk character must then engage the nearest foe.
- A berserk character may not take cover against missile attacks.
- If an ally attempts an action that may be interpreted as an attack against the berserk character, the latter must make an Intelligence check to avoid engaging the ally.
- When coming out of the rage, the character loses the 5 bonus hit points (which might drop the character below zero hit points), he or she collapses from exhaustion as if affected by a *ray of enfeeblement* for a number of rounds equal to the length of time spent berserk, and all spells cast that are due to affect the character after the rage has gone (*finger of death*, *cure wounds*, and so on) do so now.

Ing

(The Divine Man)

Demi power of the Prime Material, LG

Portfolio: Son and servant of Nerthus and Mannus

Symbol: Ing, the eighth rune of the futhark

Worshipers' Alignment: Any

Ing is the immortal son of Nerthus and Mannus. As such, he spends most of his time traveling the land and performing tasks for his parents.

Ing represents the commitment of Nerthus and Mannus to their mortal children. He walks among humans, providing the wisdom and aid of his parents where they cannot, or will not, provide such directly themselves.

Ing sometimes has a problem balancing the interests of his parents in his deeds. Although his parents are generally allied in their goals for humankind, they occasionally have conflicting agendas, forcing Ing to juggle his activities so as not to offend his mother or father.

Ing's Avatar (Ranger 20, Cleric 16)

Ing appears as a wanderer with the attitude of both warrior and scholar. He always appears clean-shaven but wears his chestnut tresses long. A brown cloak of simple design folds over his equally simple chain hauberk. In battle, he wields a *spear* +2 and a *seax* +2. His round shield is adorned with the rune that bears his name.

Ing has no avatar. These statistics apply to his true form. Should he be slain, his parents will unite their power to *resurrect* their son.

AC –4; MV 15; hp 160; THAC0 3; #AT 2; Dmg 1d6+9; MR 30%; SZ M; Str 19, Dex 17, Con 18, Int 17, Wis 18, Cha 18.

Spells P: 9/9/8/7/4/3/1

Saves PPDM 6, RSW 6, PP 5, BW 6, Sp 5

Special Att/Def: Ing may influence an individual by subtly revealing his divine nature. The individual will not (unless Ing decides otherwise) consciously realize the true nature of the deity. Under such influence, the individual will be favorably disposed to Ing, listening to his advice above that of the individual's normal advisors and treating him as a favored son.

Other Manifestations

Ing has no other manifestations beyond his true form.

The Church

Clergy: Speciality priests of the Anglo-Saxon pantheon only (see below), or worshiped by priests of Nerthus and Mannus as part of their religious doctrine. Ing has no clergy specifically devoted to him. He is nonetheless revered within Anglo-Saxon society. Both the clergies of Nerthus and Mannus revere him as the son of the deity they worship, and the community worships him as the worker of the will of the gods within the mortal world. In fact it is often in Ing's name, rather than that of his father, that vows are taken as part of the Modraneet festival.

Priests of the Anglo-Saxon Pantheon

Clergy: Speciality priests of the Anglo-Saxon pantheon

Clergy's Alignment: Any non-chaotic

Turn Undead: No

Command Undead: No

The vast majority of priests in pagan Anglo-Saxon culture do not worship the individual deities of the pantheon but rather serve their community as a whole through worship and observance of the entire pantheon. Although they respect the speciality priests of the individual gods, they believe that such individuals are ignoring a large portion of Anglo-Saxon faith and are thus incapable of serving the community effectively.

These individuals are even more focused on their community than speciality priests of Nerthus and Eostre and are generally more suited in the role of nonplayer characters within an AD&D game. However, some DMs, to create a more "correct" Anglo-Saxon setting, might wish to ignore the speciality priests of individual deities in favor of the pantheon priest described here.

Dogma: The pantheon as a whole presents the beliefs and faith necessary for the Anglo-Saxon people to lead proper, full lives. Ignoring one part is detrimental to the whole.

Christian and pagan priests might find themselves working together in the Dark Ages.

Day-to-Day Activities: Anglo-Saxon priests are very much apart from the common laborers, warriors, and nobles of Anglo-Saxon society. Their only duties are tied to appeasing the gods, observing ceremonies (as described for the individual deities themselves), and conducting sacrifices and rites.

Holy Days/Important Ceremonies: All of the holy days described for individual deities are observed by pantheon priests.

Priestly Vestments: Plain robes. During times of ceremony, or periods sacred to a particular deity, the symbols of the deities currently celebrated are also worn. (For example, Eostre's symbols are worn during Eostre-monath.)

Adventuring Garb: It is rare for a pantheon priest to wander abroad, and they do not have any special garb for such expeditions.

Speciality Priests

Requirements: Int 12, Wis 14
Prime Requisite: Wisdom
Alignment: Any non-chaotic
Weapons: None, other than for use in ceremonies
Armor: None
Major Spheres: All, Animal, Creation, Divination, Elemental Earth, Elemental Fire, Guardian, Healing, Plant, Protection, Sun, Weather
Minor Spheres: Combat, War
Magical Items: As per standard cleric
Required Proficiencies: None
Bonus Proficiencies: Religion (Anglo-Saxon pantheon)

- Priests may not ride stallions, only mares.
- A priest of the Anglo-Saxon pantheon may cast an *augury* spell once per week for every three levels attained.
- At 5th level, the priest may *bestow curse* (as per the reverse of *remove curse*) on any individual who has offended the gods.

Christianity

Christianity plays an important part in a Dark Ages campaign. The Anglo-Saxon invasion initially pitted Christian Britons against the pagan Germanic attackers. As the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms established themselves, the Roman and Celtic churches sent missionaries to the courts of the kings on quests of conversion that, by the middle of the seventh century, were largely successful. Such was the importance of some of these missionaries and the kings that welcomed them that the respective churches canonized them. After Christianity established itself and the various kingdoms began to unify into a single English nation, the debates began as to which church the nation would follow. To ignore Christianity in a Dark Ages campaign is to discard many opportunities for roleplaying and adventure within the setting.

There are two forms of Christianity in the Dark Ages setting: the Roman and the Celtic churches. The Roman church is the most powerful, having great influence across the crumbling Roman Empire, as well as being the primary faith of Britons prior to the invasion. The Celtic church was established by St. Patrick in Ireland during the early fifth century and spread—through the actions of St. Asaph, St. Columba, St. David, St. Cuthbert, and others—through Wales, the northern Anglo-Saxon and Briton kingdoms, and the south and western Picts. Even though the Synod of Whitby, in 664, decided for the Roman church within England, Christianity in England became a mixture of the ideologies of both of these churches.

In the AD&D game, treat Christian priests as lawful neutral or lawful good clerics with the bonus proficiency of Read/Write Latin.

Roman and Celtic Christianity

The differences between the Roman and Celtic churches are more a matter of the temporal than the spiritual. The Roman church has a strict hierarchy and is ultimately headed by the church of Rome itself. The Celtic church, although possessing a hierarchy, was not so rigidly organized and was more individualistic, rejecting the authority of Rome but still holding Rome as the center of Christianity. The Roman church, established as the religion of the Empire in 312, held much more temporal power than its Celtic counterpart. Roman missionaries were more aggressive in their pursuit of conversion. Both churches held the same holy days and ceremonies, but their forms of worship differed.

The Church

There are several sects to the Christian clergy of both churches. The nuns and monks of abbeys and monasteries; missionaries who travel, taking their faith from court to court; community priests looking after the spiritual needs of their congregation; influential bishops, often of noble birth, who advise kings and administer churches within their area of influence; and many others who lie between these generic models.

Dogma: There is one God, who was the creator of the universe, and to whom all humans must ultimately answer for their deeds.

Day-to-Day Activities: Caring for the spiritual needs of the community, praying for the forgiveness of the sins of their congregation, and administrating the lands held by their church.

Holy Days/Important Ceremonies: Most of the modern Christian ceremonies were observed, including Christmas, Easter, the Harvest Festival, Lent, and so forth.

Priestly Vestments: Robes, of color denoting rank and religious period currently being observed. The various colors within ecclesiastical use include: black (Good Friday), blue (ordinary Sunday services), green (weekdays and Sundays following Trinity), pale green (baptisms), purple (Ash Wednesday and the last week of Lent, also the color worn by bishops), red (holy days celebrating martyrs, and Whit Sunday), white (festivals dedicated to Christ, Maundy Thursday, and for all saints except martyrs), and violet (Advent and Lent). Bishops and archbishops also carried staves denoting their rank.

Adventuring Garb: While abroad, followers of the Celtic church generally wear robes similar to those worn at other times. Since many priests of both churches heralded from the ranks of the Eoldermen, the donning of armor and weaponry is not unknown.

Ian spends far too much time wondering about worlds that don't exist. He is a freelance technical author and historical scribbler, and is currently working with ProFantasy Ltd. on the forthcoming FORGOTTEN REALMS® *interactive atlas.*

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The Oeridian

Part I: Atroa, Delleb, and Kurell

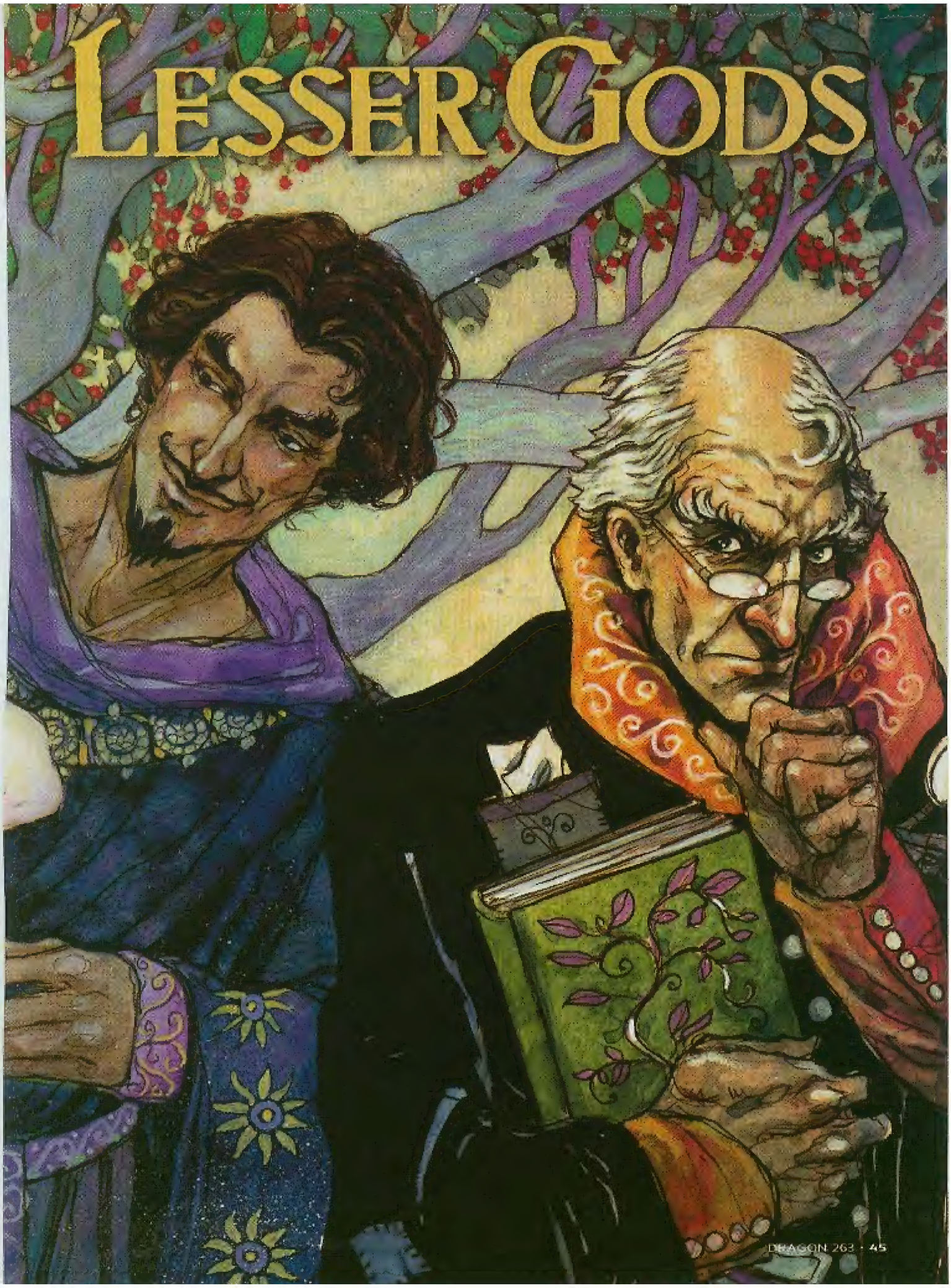
by Andy Miller

illustrated by Rebecca Guay

Aside from the fact that the Oeridians were fierce warriors and that they migrated east to escape the wars that destroyed both the Suel Empire and Baklunish Dynasty, little is known about them. From what empire did they come? What lands did they rule? What kings or chiefs were their heroes? Only the gods know the true answers to these questions.

—From a lecture given by Porthos Quurn (Savant) at the Royal University in Rel Mord, 9 Harvester, 585

LESSER GODS



Between 1982 and 1984, the gods of Oerth were examined with great detail in the pages of *DRAGON® Magazine*. With articles by E. Gary Gygax and Lenard Lakofka and the release of the *World of Greyhawk* boxed set, more than sixty deities were presented, thirty-one of them in detail.

In 1988, James M. Ward's *GREYHAWK® Adventures* supplement detailed twelve of the major gods for 2nd edition.

In 1992, the GREYHAWK setting was reenergized with with the *From the Ashes* boxed set. The greater and intermediate gods were updated for 2nd Edition, and now we had twenty-nine gods for specialty priests and clerics.

To help complete the pantheon of GREYHAWK deities, here is the first in a series detailing the lesser Oeridian gods of Greyhawk, all presented in the *Faiths and Avatars* format. Though unable to grant 7th-level spells, these powers are important on Oerth and can easily be used in any AD&D® game campaign.

ATROA

(Bringer of Spring, Wind-Daughter, Provider, Shy One, First Sister)

Lesser Power of the Beastlands, NG

Portfolio: Spring, east wind, renewal

Aliases: None

Domain Name: Brux/Grove of Perpetual Spring

Superior: Velnius (father)

Allies: Ehlonna, Phaulkon, Sotillon, Velnius

Foes: Telchur

Symbol: Kara tree full of red, ripe fruit

Worshipers' Alignment: Any good

Atroa (ah-TRO-ah) is the youngest of the three daughters of Velnius. She is the power of rebirth and the first sister of the seasons to show her face after Telchur has his wintry reign. She brings the warmth back to land after winter's cold grip, causes the crops to grow, and brings the warm winds from the east. She represents planting and self-perpetuation.

Atroa is a shy god, rarely communicating to her priests or followers. Her worshipers understand the circle of life that she represents—birth, growth, death, rebirth. The seasons always change, but life and spring always comes again. Atroa assures her people of that.

Atroa's Avatar

(Mystic 18, Druid 14)

Atroa almost never appears in avatar form. A threat to her followers must be very great for this power to set foot on Oerth. When she does appear, Atroa takes the form of a beautiful young woman dressed in a short, green skirt and tunic. A few fresh, green leaves are usually tucked in her blonde hair. Her features are perfect, more elven than human, and her skin is tanned by the sun. Warm breezes constantly play about her hair and clothes, keeping both in motion. She is never armed.

AC –6; MV 12, fly 24 (B); hp 145; THAC0 10; #AT 2; Dmg 1d10 (martial arts); MR 50% (100% against druids); SZ M (5' tall); Str 17, Dex 18, Con 19, Int 19, Wis 18, Chr 22.

Spells P: 10/10/9/9/6/4/2

Saves PPDM 2, RSW 6, PP 5, BW 8, Sp 7

Special Att/Def: Atroa cannot be struck by wooden or natural weapons. The wind that constantly blows about her keeps any missile weapons from touching her. Only metal wielded by hand can hurt her. She can cast up to two *gust of wind* spells per round in addition to any attacks or magic, and she uses these to keep her enemies at bay. Atroa also has the natural ability to *charm* anyone at will (saving throws against this effect are made at a –5 penalty). This powerful ability effects even elves and their kin. Atroa uses martial arts (from the *Complete Fighter's Handbook*) if forced to fight hand-to-hand.

Atroa regenerates 5 hit points per round. She exerts complete control over any plant or plantlike creature within a mile of her location, and treants have been known to fight to the death for the god.

Other Manifestations

Atroa most often manifests as a gentle gust of warm wind. Sometimes she lets her followers know she is about by causing grass or greenery to sprout in an unusual place, such as grass growing suddenly in a snowstorm or vines growing out of solid rock inside a building. The demonstrations are rare, however, as Atroa seems reluctant to deal with mortals.

The Church

Clergy: Clerics, specialty priests, mystics

Clergy's Alignment: NG, CG, LG

Turn Undead: Clerics: yes, specialty priests: yes, mystics: yes

Command Undead: Clerics: no, specialty priests: no, mystics: no

The church of Atroa is widespread along the routes of the Oeridian migrations to the east. She is widely worshiped in Ull, Ket, Bissel, the Gran March, Keoland, the Ulek States, the County of Urnst, the Great Kingdom (or what's left of it), and in the Wolf and Tiger Nomads' lands. Other lands often have small shrines dedicated to the god, though they see little use except in the spring. Many farmers worship her, praying for a good harvest and an early spring. Sailors and sea merchants sometimes pay their respects to Atroa and pray to her for favorable winds to blow their way. The trade winds of the spring and summer which blow from the east are often called "Atroa's breath."

Temples to Atroa are usually small, simple shrines or chapels. They are always made of wood and have many windows (most of which face east) to allow the wind to blow through. Carved wooden statues depicting Atroa sometimes stand above the altars. Each chapel invariably has a tower with a bell mounted in it for ringing out the hours. Most of the churches have large gardens.

There are two sects of the church of Atroa: the Planterings and the Bearers. The Planterings revere spring, the renewal of life through farming and animal husbandry, and the warmth brought by the eastern winds. These young women and men are hard-working members of the church who use magic and their own hands to see that the yearly crops are planted and readied. They are most active in the early year and spend their winters preparing for the spring again. The Bearers have taken more strongly to Atroa's portfolio of renewal, spreading the word of the god in that light and urging the proliferation of the human race. Almost always women, Bearers revere the family and the propagation of children, and they are often pregnant themselves. Bearers often run orphanages, treating each child as if he

or she were the Atroan's own and keeping them well fed, well rested, and loved. They are taught at an early age the importance of Atroa and of life itself. Male Bearers are very rare.

Dogma: Atroa's followers believe in the goodness of people. Each new thing is part of the cycle of life. Celibacy is frowned on in the church, and marriage is encouraged for both its members and clergy. Pregnancy is looked upon as "the blessing of Atroa," and priests who become pregnant are seen as the holiest of all. Although there are fewer male than female priests in Atroa's church (about 80% of the clergy is female), they are also respected for their own ability to father children.

The church also teaches responsibility. Although Atroa's followers preach renewal and rebirth without constraint, they also believe in nurturing what has been planted. Allowing a plant to die or a child to go hungry because of neglect are both seen as great sins.

Day-to-Day Activities: Priests of Atroa are most active in the spring, when they take part in the planting of crops. Atroa has no reluctant followers. Everyone spends some time in the fields planting seeds, pulling weeds, digging canals, or maintaining the fields. The clergy of the church tend to the fields throughout the spring and summer, and many of them become quite learned in the areas of crop rotation, fertilization, irrigation, and agriculture in general.

Many priests of Atroa (especially bearers) are midwives.

Holy Days & Important Ceremonies: Morning prayers and thanks to the Wind-Daughter for another day and another season are important to the clergy of Atroa. Working in the fields is considered prayer, and the mantra "Blessed be this ground" is often recited while doing so. Priests bless newly born children and newly formed families, and they preside over funerals, preaching that even the dead will someday come again.

The holiest day of the year is the Spring Feast, which falls on the 4th day of Growfest (Spring Equinox). This is a day of prayer, rest, reflection upon the last year, and thoughts of what the new year will bring. Almost as important is the entire festival of Growfest, when the clergy of the church are busy planting. The week is filled with days full of back-breaking work, followed by evenings of song, prayer, food, and drink. Only Godsday, the 4th of Growfest, is set aside as a day of rest during this time, breaking the planting into two short half-weeks and making the work seem easier for all involved.

Major Centers of Worship: The Temple of the Children is the largest temple of Atroa in the Flanaess. Situated in the city of Gradsul in the Kingdom of Keoland, this large, wooden structure competes with the Foaming Tower (the temple of Osprem, also located in Gradsul) for followers. Since most sailors want the blessings of both gods, the churches have many members that belong to both. The Temple of the Children also serves as one of the greatest orphanages in Keoland.

The Trade Wind Chapel in High Mardreth in the County of Urnst is the second largest Atroan temple. This place caters to sailors and ships and has grown since the Greyhawk Wars as more shipping bypasses Nyrond for the Urnst States.

Affiliated Orders: Atroa's church has no affiliated orders.

Priestly Vestments: Clergy of Atroa usually wear simple farmers' clothes and green wide-brimmed hats tied tightly to their heads. Sometimes they wear green cloaks covered with red dots, and they almost always wear leather gloves to work in the fields. Formal dress includes green, knee-length robes with short sleeves (usually halfway between the wrist and elbow in length) and hoods. The clergy believe that whatever they wear, it should not get in the way of the day to day business of work.

Adventuring Garb: Atroan clergy usually dress like farmers, though often wearing green, wide-brimmed hats and green and red cloaks. Atroa's holy symbol is worn prominently at the neck or on the hat band. Clergy who choose to wear armor usually chose plain, unadorned leather armor.

Specialty Priests (Green Daughters/Sons)

Requirements: Constitution 14
Prime Requisites: Constitution, Wisdom
Alignment: NG
Weapons: Any nonmetal
Armor: Any nonmetal
Major Spheres: All, Animal, Creation, Healing, Plant, Sun, Weather
Minor Spheres: Divination, Time
Required Proficiencies: None
Bonus Proficiencies: Herbalism and either Agriculture (Planterings) or Healing (Bearers)

† Halflings can become Green Daughters or Sons, but this is relatively rare.

† All Green Daughters or Sons gain a bonus of +2 to saving throws vs. aging, withering, or rotting. If no saving throw is usually allowed, the Green Daughter or Son still receives a saving throw with no bonus.

† At 3rd level, the Green Daughter or Son can cast *gust of wind* once per day for every three levels of ability.

† At 6th level, the Green Daughter or Son *regenerates* 1 hit point per turn, even if killed.

† At 12th level, Green Daughters and Sons can cast *regenerate* once per day.

Delleb

(The God Scholar, Sage of the Gods, The Good Savant)
Lesser Power of Mt. Celestia, LG

Portfolio: Reason, Intellect
Aliases: None
Domain Name: Solania/The Great Library
Superior: None
Allies: Boccob, St. Cuthbert, Lirr, Zuoken
Foes: Syrul, Hextor
Symbol: Open book
Worshipers' Alignment: LG

Delleb (DELL-eb) is the god of sages. He stands for knowledge, freely given and freely received. As a god of intellect, he believes that all of his followers should hone their minds to the fullest extent and then teach others to do the same. He is sometimes called the most honest of gods, for he neither lies nor speaks a half-truth.

He and Syrul, the Suloise god of lies and deceit, have long been rivals. The two have warred among themselves since long before the Rain of Colorless Fire and Invoked Devastation over a thousand years ago.

Delleb loves riddles and puzzles, though they take him little time to solve. He has never been tricked, though many have tried. Delleb never tires of outwitting his enemies, although he yearns for a true mental challenge.

Delleb's Avatar

(Mage 20, Cleric 15)

Delleb's avatar appears as a tall, thin Oeridian man with olive skin. He looks very old, and the top of is head is balding, leaving only some short tufts of gray hair on the sides and back. He wears reading glasses, and a magnifying glass protrudes from his coat pocket. He usually carries a large book and is always accompanied by a large, black labrador retriever named Shadow.

Delleb is most often dressed as a scholar, wearing black robes filled with many pockets. When in this form, he is usually slightly bent, as if under a great weight (though his posture is simply bad from so much reading and writing). His head is never covered and seems to glow slightly, as do his eyes.

Delleb occasionally takes the form of a warrior. When he appears thus, he wears full platemail, though his head is still bare, and he carries a sabre. Over his back is slung a strange device of metal and wood longer than the god is tall. He sometimes appears mounted on an immense war horse.

AC –10; MV 12 (36 mounted); hp 175; THAC0 8; #AT 2; Dmg 1d8 + 6 (sabre) or 1d10+special (flintlock rifle); MR 55%; SZ M (6' tall); Str 16, Dex 20, Con 18, Int 25, Wis 23, Chr 19.

Spells P: 10/9/9/9/6/3/1 M: 5/5/5/5/5/4/3/3/2

Saves PPDM 5, RSW 5, PP 7, BW 9, Sp 6

Special Att/Def: Delleb's *sabre* +5 is a *holy avenger* called Delente-Vinnos (roughly "That which strikes down ignorance" in Old Oeridian). His weapon of preference, however, is a 7'-long musket of his own invention. This device appears to be a typical flintlock rifle (or arquebus—though no one on Oerth has ever seen one work) of unusual length. The barrel is balanced by several strands of tight wire mounted on struts projecting from the metal shaft. A large targeting circle on the end is likewise reinforced with wires, and the stock is made of bronzewood. Delleb alone can fire this weapon, and when he does, the explosion can be heard for miles. The weapon's ranges are 1 mile/10 miles/100 miles. If an even number is rolled for damage by this giant rifle, the die is rolled again and the result added to the first figure. This is done until an odd number is rolled. It is magically loaded and can be fired twice every round.

Delleb has the power to *confuse* his opponents, either by touch, striking with his sabre, or with a bullet from his musket. He can use this power up to twice per round, and the *confusion* lasts until Delleb wishes it to cease. Delleb also has a goose feather quill pen that he can use to the same effect.

Delleb is immune to any and all Illusion and Enchantment/Charm spells, easily seeing through such deception. He is also able to guess the next logical move any living being will make and always reacts with such foresight.

Shadow is a large, black lab with a glean of intelligence in her eyes. She can speak several languages fluently, though she rarely does. She is fully ten times as strong as a typical war dog.

Other Manifestations

Delleb believes his followers and clergy should find their own way and use their own intellects to solve problems—hence he rarely appears. Some of his other manifestations, however, are the smell of old books, a shadow around the corner in a library or temple (though no one is there), or even a sudden insight to a previously puzzling problem. He sends Shadow as his manifestation sometimes, and the dog often appears as one of the canines of the church, but with an intellect far beyond that of a normal dog.

The Church

Clergy: Clerics, specialty priests, monks, paladins
Clergy's Alignment: LG
Turn Undead: Clerics: yes, specialty priests: yes, monks: no, P: no
Command Undead: Clerics: no, specialty priests: no, monks: no, paladins: no

Temple-schools of Delleb can be found throughout the Flanaess along the routes use by the Oeridians during their migrations. They are most prevalent in Furyondy, Veluna, Nyrond, the Urnst States, and Keoland. Sages throughout the Flanaess give respect and prayer to Delleb.

The temples themselves are stout structures built of stone and wood, almost always having a protective wall around them (though they are open to anyone most of the time). Some of the greatest libraries in the land are contained within the temples, and whole wings are devoted solely to teaching. Most temples have a special building or two on their grounds reserved for the teaching of children, who are allowed to learn for free. Those cities and towns lucky enough to have a temple of Delleb have some of the highest literacy rates in the world.

The clergy of Delleb is divided into the scholars, librarians, and knights. The scholars of Delleb are the largest group and consist of the best thinkers, philosophers, mathematicians, historians, and sages of the church. They are divided into the learners and the teachers. The learners revere learning for its

own sake and study all they can on one or more subjects, usually becoming experts or sages in that field. Bards often seek out scholars for information about local or ancient history. Some scholars are scientists who run careful experiments in an attempt to discover more about the world they inhabit. (A scholar of Delleb is credited with the invention of the crossbow.)

The teachers represent a smaller sect of the scholars. These are the men and women who run the various schools of the church, spreading knowledge to as many as possible. Some of them work in the temple schools while others roam the lands, teaching wherever they end up. The teachers are divided into assistants (acolytes who are still learning), mentors (full time teachers), and savants (who teach at the highest levels, sometimes to other scholars).

The librarians are in charge of the books in the libraries of the temples. These books must be indexed, cross referenced, and copied for distribution to other temples or to those who wish to purchase the knowledge. The acolytes of this order invariably end up in the scriptorium, copying and illuminating such works as accurately as possible. These scripters are the lowest of the librarians and are closely watched by the bookkeepers who run the libraries. They, in turn, pay heed to the Chief Librarian.

The knights of Delleb are a noble order of warriors who defend the church and spread knowledge as far as possible. This group has grown considerably since the Greyhawk Wars, especially in Furyondy and Nyrond.

The church is also known for its doctors. A few temples in the Flanaess are dedicated solely to healing (magical and mundane). The hospitals of Delleb are often run by the scholars. Those unfortunates who do not survive treatment still further the cause of science and medicine through autopsy.

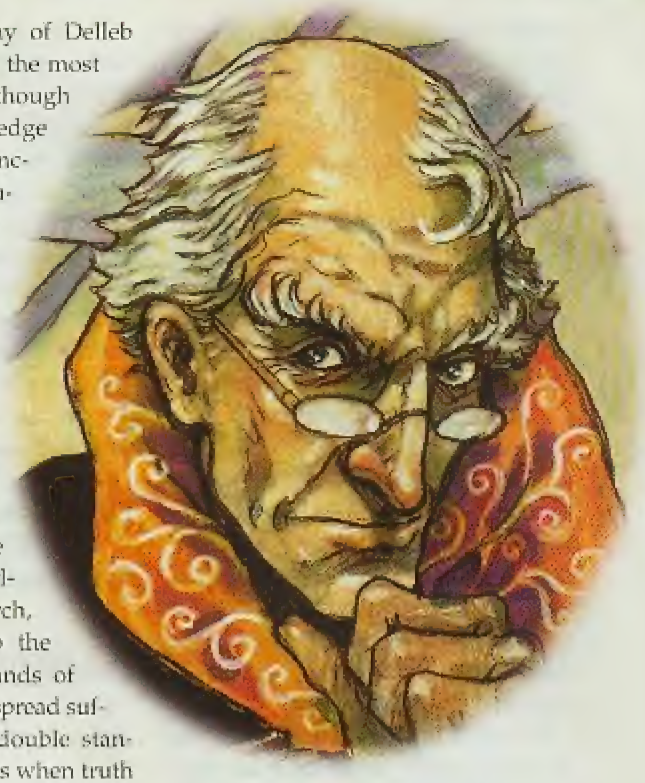
Dogs are revered by the church as "man's most intelligent, honest, and loyal friend." Most temples have at least a few dogs on the premises, often taking in strays and giving them a good home. Black labs are the most important breed and thought of as the smartest of all dogs. They are preferred by the church over others.

Dogma: The philosophy of Delleb teaches that knowledge is the most important thing of all, though even the hunt for knowledge does not supersede the sanctity of life. The clergy emulate their all-knowing god by searching for knowledge and then spreading it far and wide. Secrets that contain true knowledge are seen as a blasphemy, as information belongs to anyone who is willing to seek it. Those who covet secrets are the greatest enemies of the church. Even evil knowledge is sacred to the church, though they try to keep the worst of it out of the hands of those who would use it to spread suffering. This hypocritical double standard (the keeping of secrets when truth belongs to everyone) is often overlooked or ignored by the lay brothers. Only Delleb himself (acting through his highest priests) can authorize the destruction of any bit of writing that imparts knowledge. Debates on the nature of good and evil (and what constitutes "evil knowledge") rage constantly between members of the scholars and other sects.

The church also teaches its clergy and followers to hone their intellects. Riddle and pun contests are common and important. Those who win are usually rewarded with elevation in the church or access to the more delicate books. Logic puzzles are also well regarded.

Day-to-Day Activities: Members of the clergy spend their days doing what their sect finds most important. This includes copying and sorting books, spreading information to other libraries, teaching, or experimenting. Followers of Delleb see it as their daily duty to think up some new thought, preferably something no one has ever thought of before.

Holy Days & Important Ceremonies: The Mass of Knowledge is performed each Godsday. In it the priests of the church follow a strict ceremony of worship and speak of new learnings. The ceremonies usually last the better part of a day, the rest of the holy day being given over to discussion of the new ideas by members of the clergy.



On the eve of Freeday, scholars of the church visit taverns or inns, listening to stories and hearing the general gossip or news. Many hours are spent listening to what the local people have to say and copiously committing it to memory. For these priests, Freeday morning is usually spent writing notes on what they heard. The following week, the priests try to determine which of this information is true and which is false, taking notes about both. This practice has upset more than a few people, but since the priests are usually willing to pay for verification of rumors or hearsay, complaints are usually put aside.

Major Centers of Worship: The Savant's Hospital, once called simply the Library Temple, in Chendl, is the largest of Delleb's temples in the Flanaess. Though the building was damaged during the siege of the city, it has since been repaired and rededicated to the healing order of the clerics of Delleb. The library (except for the more important medical texts) has been moved south to Littleberg. The priests in Chendl worry little about the daily activity of the city, usually deferring to the priests of Rao and working to learn and teach as much about the healing arts as possible.

The University Temple in Rel Mord, Nyrond is another scholarly hold. This

temple is closely connected to the Royal University, and quite a few of its priests (savants) teach at the school. The temple is thought to hold some of the most knowledgeable and intelligent men in the land.

Affiliated Orders: The Church of Delleb has a knightly order of paladins called the Knights of the Book. These warriors protect temples as needed, serve as military advisors and leaders of levied troops to protect the church and lands around it, and even act as teachers of military strategy and history. An honorary order of the church for those sages and philosophers who are not clergy is the Silver Savants. Membership in the group is restricted to those who have made a great discovery or unearthed long-lost knowledge. These men and women are held in high esteem by the church.

Priestly Vestments: Clergy of the church generally wear black scholarly robes. Mortarboards are typical headdresses of the church, and these are also black and have long tassels of gold, silver, or white dangling from their centers. These denote scholars, librarians, or members of the Silver Savants respectively. Knights of the Book wear dark armor and their helmets usually have long, black tassels attached to their tops.

Adventuring Garb: Worshipers of Delleb wear whatever is most appropriate for adventuring and are known for planning ahead. They generally stick to black clothing or armor, though their helmets usually resemble, at least slightly, a mortarboard. A tassel is always worn from the top of the helm.

Specialty Priests (Tomesages)

Requirements: Wisdom 15, Intelligence 16

Prime Requisites: Wisdom, Intelligence

Alignment: LG

Weapons: Any

Armor: Any

Major Spheres: All, Combat, Divination, Healing, Law, Numbers, Thought, Time

Minor Spheres: War

Required Proficiencies: Modern Language, Reading/Writing

Bonus Proficiencies: Ancient History, Local History, Religion

† All tomesages are allowed to specialize in one nonweapon proficiency and are considered to have considerable knowledge in this field. Proficiency checks are considered 19 regardless of the actual ability score.

† All tomesages gain the same bonus as the academician (*Complete Wizard's Handbook*) to Intelligence and Wisdom for proficiency checks.

† Tomesages can cast *zone of truth* once per day.

† At 6th level, a tomesage can cast *confusion* once per day.

† At 10th level, a tomesage can cast *true seeing* once per day.

† At 15th level, a tomesage can cast *divine inspiration* once per day.

Kurell

(The Green-Eyed God, The Avenger, Black Wolf of the North, Lord of Thieves)

Lesser Power of Limbo, CN

Portfolio: Jealousy, revenge, thievery

Aliases: Black Wolf (Wolf Nomads and Flan)

Domain Name: The House of Locks

Superior: None

Allies: Syrul, Erythnul, Xan Yae

Foes: Pholtus

Symbol: Single green eye

Worshipers' Alignment: Any chaotic

Kurell (KER-el) is the Vengeance-Seeker, the Watcher Who Never Sleeps, the Vengeful God. He embodies petty jealousy and revenge, trusting no one completely and hating those he believes have broken his trust or who simply seem better and bigger than he is (including almost all of the gods). He is also the god of thieves, although those who worship him know better than to depend on him.

Kurell always seems angry and defensive. He is the most paranoid of the gods, believing that everyone is against him or laughing at him. He lives in fear that he will miss something, jealous that someone else might be having a better time than he is or be better than he is. He is a petty god who deals with his own inadequacies by reinforcing those same feelings in others, typically his followers.

Kurell's actual form (which is never seen by others and not even known by the god's own clergy) is that of a small man under 5 feet tall. He is unremarkable, unattractive, and slightly overweight. His features resemble those of his avatar to a lesser extent. The god is seen like this only if he is somehow taken by surprise. He does his worst to destroy any who learn his secret.

Kurell's Avatar

(Thief 25, Fighter 20)

When the god of vengeance takes form in the Prime Material Plane, he appears as a tall, handsome, virile man. His green eyes are bright, flashing in the light, but are cold and filled with anger. Kurell rarely smiles, doing so only when some revenge has been fulfilled. The god wears dark clothing, black leather armor, and a black cloak. He is armed only with small, easily concealed weapons. Kurell chooses a form meant to incite the most envy in whomever he is appearing before, choosing a style of clothing and dress that most matches (but easily outshines) whomever he likes least in any group.

AC –4; MV 12; HP 190; THAC0 1; #AT 4; Dmg 1d6+6 and poison (×4); MR 55%; SZ L (6' tall); Str 18/00, Dex 22, Con 18, Int 19, Wis 17, Chr 20.

Spells: None

Saves PPDM 3, RSW 4, PP 4, BW 4, Sp 5

Special Att/Def: Kurell's avatar rarely engages in combat, as he is too cowardly to fight face to face. When forced into melee, he usually relies on two small daggers covered with a never-ending supply of poison. Victims of the blades must make a successful saving throw vs. poison or die instantly. He also throws his black-bladed "poison blades" up to ten times the normal range for such weapons. Thrown daggers reappear in Kurell's hand after they strike or immediately if the god misses his target. Kurell has the natural ability to *shadow walk* and makes great use of his Backstab ability (×5 damage). Kurell's most potent power is his ability to turn invisible as per an *improved invisibility* spell for as long and as often as the god desires.

Other Manifestations

Kurell is said to manifest in any person

who seeks vengeance or is jealous (for whatever reason). He sometimes takes the form of a large, black wolf with bright green eyes. Other times he appears as a shiny, bloody dagger that hovers in the air. Kurell often appears in nightmares in one of these forms, goading the unfortunate dreamer toward acts of vengeance.

The Church

Clergy: Clerics, specialty priests, shamans, thieves

Clergy's Alignment: CN, CE, CG (few)

Turn Undead: Cleric: no, specialty priests: no, shamans: no, thieves: no

Command Undead: Clerics: yes if evil, specialty priests: yes if evil shamans: yes if evil, thieves: no

Although Kurell doesn't have a large following, he is worshiped in the Wolf Nomads' lands and the lands that were once the Rovers of the Barrens. He is typically more feared than revered due to his unpredictability. Those who seek revenge pray to him for aid and are rarely disappointed. Thieves everywhere pay some tribute to Kurell, mostly out of fear that the jealous god will take out his wrath on them at the worst possible moment if they don't.

Only a small following of the god existed in the Hold of the Sea Princes before it was captured by the Scarlet Brotherhood. Since the land's loss to the Suloise-folk of that society, worshipers of Kurell have actually grown in number and a few hidden temples have been established. The followers of the god pray for revenge against the Brotherhood. Since the Suel do not tolerate any religion but their own, those caught or suspected of worshiping the Oeridian power are sentenced to death.

The largest open following of Kurell is in the city of Atirr in the remains of the Great Kingdom. Assassination is legal in this city, and the church is thought to have close ties to the College of Endings and Beginnings (the Assassin's Guild).

Few temples exist that venerate Kurell (making the god even more furious and jealous). Those that do are typically small shrines or unusual natural sites where some great revenge was perpetrated. Any place where revenge is contemplated or acted upon is considered holy to his clergy.

The members who represent Kurell's clergy are solely men who jealously guard their power from all others. Some think females are excluded to elicit more jealousy from women. The church is too protective and small to have definitive sects.

Dogma: Followers of Kurell believe they have a right to whatever they want. These same folks jealously guard what they believe to be theirs and punish those who try to take it from them. Along the same line of thinking, many believe that seeking retribution for wrongs is more important and more likely to end "correctly" if they do it themselves rather than allowing courts or government to interfere.

Oddly enough, though the followers of the church and the clergy trust no one, they are often trustworthy. This is simply because they don't want revenge practiced against them.

Day-to-Day Activities: Priests and clergy of Kurell are masters of revenge. Some of the clergy also practice the art of assassination, which they consider the "professional" act of revenge. They are highly paid and used by the church itself on those occasions that require vengeance.

Holy Days & Important Ceremonies: Prayers are offered nightly to Kurell, usually centering around those on whom the devotee wishes revenge. The night is considered holier than the day, as it conceals those who wish to take their revenge, as well as those who ply the trade of thievery.

The two main holy days of the church are the Winter Solstice (Midwinter's Eve) and Kurell's Night. The Winter Solstice on the 4th day of Needfest is the longest night of the year, and is also known as the Dark Time or the Dim Time. This, too, is a night when worshipers help themselves and others wreak vengeance. Kurell's Night is the 11th of Goodmonth, an evening when both Luna and Celene are new and dark. This is the most important of nights for the church, when the greatest acts of revenge and theft take place. Either act, performed successfully on this night, is said to win Kurell's blessing. (A donation had also better be made to the church afterward in thanks for Kurell's help, or the god might seek some vengeance of his own.)

Since 583 CY, the church has begun to recognize one more important date: Coldeven 11, the night of the Blood Moon Festival. With the coup in the Horned Society by the followers of Iuz and the death of all the Hierarchs of that land, the date is now recognized as the greatest act of revenge in history (aside from the Rain of Colorless Fire, the exact date of which is not known).

Major Centers of Worship: The most foreboding and unnerving of the few temples of Kurell is known as Black Wolf's Lair. This natural cave complex lies in the Burneal Forest just east of the Fler River (hex I5–68). The cave is shunned by all the Nomads save for the few shamans of the deity who live in the area. It is considered a holy place by followers of Kurell, and many vile cave paintings adorn the walls. It is said that the caverns stretch deep into the earth.

The only other established temple to the god lies in the College of Endings and Beginnings, in Atirr. This small chapel is often filled with the

black-clothed assassins of the college, praying for luck on their next assignment. Rich silks, precious metals, and mounted jewels adorn the chapel, which has never been robbed or pilfered. Rumor has it the place is jealously watched by the god himself.

Affiliated Orders: The College of Endings and Beginnings is the only order strongly affiliated with the church. This guild/college, though based in Atirr, receives contracts from all over the Flanaess and trains its Black Shirts (or Dark Blades, as they are sometimes called) in the art of murder. The college acts as both a training ground for assassins and a guild where such can receive jobs. Although the college seems to have its fingers in everyone's pockets, it has authority in Atirr only to punish those who assassinate without the sanction of the guild.

Priestly Vestments: Clergy of Kurell tend to wear black, tight-fitting clothing. Robes are sometimes worn (usually filled with small weapons), and black half-cloaks and hoods are almost always part of the vestments. The clothing is of the finest sort (silk, velvet, and so on) and is usually adorned with small gems or precious metals.

Those that worship the god drape themselves in the finest furs or cloth available, attaching precious stones or items to their clothing. If possible, the coverings are dark or dyed black, and the head is always covered with a hood.

Adventuring Garb: Priests of Kurell wear the same clothing while adventuring, though they often wear black dyed leather armor over their other garments. Their clothing is of the finest quality they can acquire (even if this requires subterfuge or theft) in an effort to make all who see them jealous. Hoods are always worn while the individual is in public.

Specialty Priests (Quickfingers)

Requirements: Dexterity 15
Prime Requisites: Dexterity, Wisdom
Alignment: CN, CE, CG
Weapons: As thief
Armor: As thief
Major Spheres: All, Chaos, Combat, Guardian, Necromantic, Protection, Wards
Minor Spheres: Charm, Divination, Sun (reversed)
Required Proficiencies: Alertness
Bonus Proficiencies: Blind Fighting

† Only human males can become specialty priests of Kurell.

† At first level, all priests of Kurell gain the Move Silently and Hide in Shadows abilities at 25%. Upon each following level, the priest gains a 5% bonus to each skill.

† At 5th level, quickfingers can cast *invisibility* once per day.

† At 7th level, quickfingers can cast *wraithform* once per day.

† At 9th level, quickfingers can cast *poison* (opposite of *neutralize poison*) once per day.

No GREYHAWK god has ever appeared in person in Andy's various campaigns of the past twenty years. Eris, the Greek god of discord, made an appearance several years after he ran "The Chest of the Aloeids" from DUNGEON® Adventures #21. His PCs briefly met both Athena and Hermes in the same adventure.

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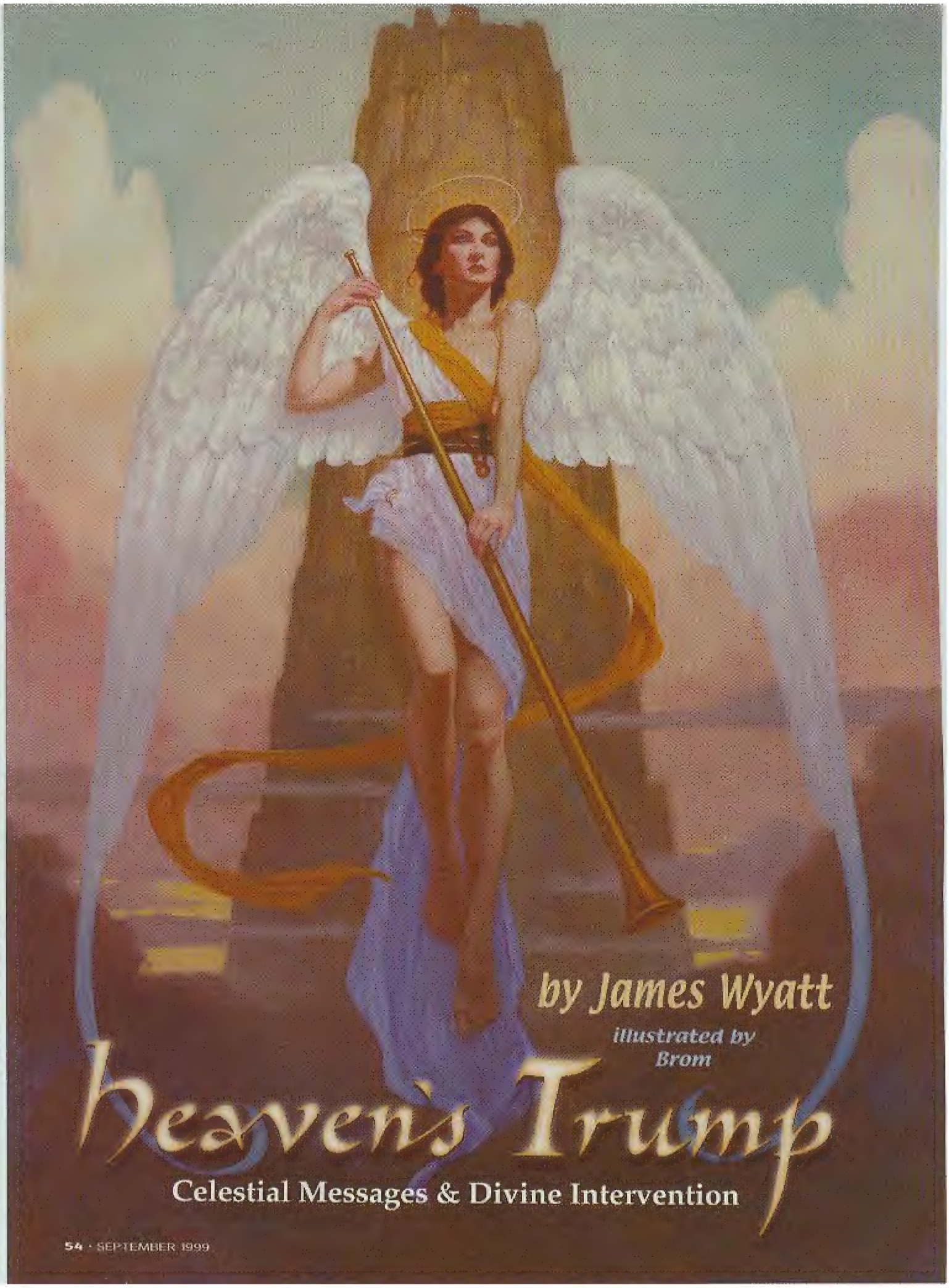


by James Wyatt

illustrated by Brom

heaven's Trump

Celestial Messages & Divine Intervention

EVIL IS A POWERFUL FORCE in almost every Prime Material world—the subtle evil of a greedy bureaucrat, the crazed evil of a bloodthirsty killer, or the calculating evil of a mastermind bent on world domination. The role of most heroes in fantasy campaigns is to fight this evil, countering its schemes and vanquishing its monstrous champions. In many campaigns, this struggle might seem hopeless, or at least endless. The forces of evil might be so great that even the heroes of the campaign can imagine no possible end to them.

Fortunately, mortal heroes are not on their own against the forces of evil. Good Powers, like the evil ones, have their agents and armies, counterbalancing the plague of evil and its diabolical emissaries. While mortal heroes are among the most important of these agents, angelic beings from the Upper Planes—including aasimon, archons, asuras, eladrins, and guardinals—sometimes enter the worlds of the Prime Material Plane to provide aid to these heroes in their struggle against evil.

Fiends and other diabolical creatures tend to be manipulative in their dealings with mortals. They view earthly creatures as pawns at best. Human servants are used and discarded; the loss of an entire mortal army is of little consequence to a fiend accustomed to the slaughter of the Blood War. Even the mightiest creatures of good, on the other hand, believe that mortals are valuable and important in their own right. Thus, the servants of light strive to accomplish their goals while protecting their mortal allies.

For PCs devoted to the struggle against evil, these celestial messengers can be important allies. This means that heavenly agents can be a useful tool for you, the Dungeon Master. If the campaign is to offer a balanced challenge to the PCs, divine messengers must remain behind the scenes, perhaps sparking an adventure here or there, perhaps motivating an entire campaign, but never doing the heroes' job for them. They know, as does any good DM, that mortals (the PCs included) need to feel that they've earned their success.

On a Mission from God

Celestial messengers can be useful tools for directing the action of a campaign, delivering messages that send the PCs in specific directions. High-level characters who have shown a modicum of respect for the gods of the campaign during their careers might find those gods calling on them to perform important quests through the agency of a divine messenger—generally an asuras, a trumpet archon, or perhaps a hollyphant. In its most direct form, this message involves the heavenly envoy appearing in a blaze of glory and proclaiming the mission the Powers have in mind for the PCs. Celestials also have the power to appear in the dreams of mortals to deliver their messages. Either method can be somewhat heavy-handed, but it encourages the players to feel that their characters are an important part of cosmic events. Naturally, the nature of the quest should contribute to this feeling. If a trumpet archon commands the PCs to weed the Great Temple's flower garden, the effect is somewhat diminished.

Note that the PCs need not be the direct recipients of a divine message. A party of low-level characters could be witnesses to a visitation directed at a more important personage. For example, the PCs might happen to be watching a royal parade when an asuras appears before the queen's litter, bringing it to a halt. The asuras instructs the queen to recover a holy artifact from an ancient shrine in the desert. In obedience to the divine command, the queen needs brave heroes to accomplish this quest on her behalf, and the PCs are in the right place at the right time. This way, even PCs of relatively insignificant power and experience can become part of events much larger than themselves.

Of course, celestial messengers are not always so direct, even when the mission is straightforward. Heavenly messengers who appear to mortal PCs are hard to refuse. The PCs (and their players) might feel manipulated if they are sent on a quest with no say in the matter. Thus, celestials often choose to conceal themselves in mortal disguise. In J.R.R. Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings, the wizard Gandalf—essentially a heavenly envoy in disguise—instigated two major quests without revealing his true nature or the extent of his power. His chosen champions, incidentally, were apparently insignificant individuals, proving that the Powers of the heavens can often gauge an individual's potential, making even beginning PCs worthy of notice.

Divine messengers can send the PCs on any sort of quest; their attention is not restricted to recovering holy artifacts, slaughtering infidels, and increasing church membership. Because celestials tend not to manipulate mortals as pawns in their personal politics, the PCs can feel confident that their mission is advancing the greater cause of good. It might also be helping a celestial settle an ages-old personal vendetta, but that—from the celestial's perspective—is just the icing on the cake.

Another way celestial messengers can influence the short-term actions of a group of PCs is more corrective than instructive. PCs—particularly priests and paladins—might receive divine guidance if they are straying from the path of righteousness. A heavenly messenger in this case might send the straying PC on a quest of atonement (see "101 Paladin Quests" in *DRAGON® Magazine* issue #257 for excellent quest ideas), it might announce on the Power's behalf that the PC will be denied certain spells, or it might simply warn the PC away from his or her current course of action. When delivering such warnings, celes-

Phaedrus, Male hollyphant

INT Genius (17–18); AL NG; AC −4; MV 9, fly 36 (B); HD 6+6; hp 39; THAC0 15; #AT 2; Dmg 1d3/1d3; SA Trumpet, psionics; SD Immune to disease and poison, invulnerability, +1 or better weapon to hit, psionics; MR 60%; SZ S (2' long); ML Steady (11–12); XP 9,000. Hollyphants are detailed in the PLANESCAPE™ Monstrous Compendium® Appendix, Volume 2.

Primary Power: Lathander (Greater/NG/Elysium).

Secondary Power: Seker (Lesser/NG/Elysium).

Appearance: Phaedrus is a typical hollyphant in most ways: a 2'-long elephant covered in golden fur with a pair of white feathery wings. His tusks gleam like silver, and his eyes shine like diamonds, reflecting every color of the rainbow. He has a large nick in his left ear, which he received in a confrontation with a death knight many years ago.

Personality Traits: Wry, insightful, cheerful, and somewhat vengeful.

Roleplaying Notes: Phaedrus is serious and aggressive for a hollyphant. By human standards, he exudes good humor and seems harmless, until he encounters an undead creature. Since the encounter with a death knight that nicked his ear and scarred his soul, Phaedrus has loathed all undead creatures. He serves both Seker and Lathander because of their opposition to the undead, caring little for the other aspects of their portfolios and agendas.

Phaedrus could appear as a messenger to:

- Send the PCs on a mission to exterminate a lich, vampire, death knight, or other powerful undead creature.
- Send the PCs to infiltrate and break up a cult devoted to a god such as Chemosh, or a cabal of necromancers.
- Guide the PCs to the location of an *amulet versus undead, wand of illumination, sun blade, mace of disruption*, or other magical item or artifact useful against undead (possibly in preparation for another mission).
- Send high-level PCs to destroy an artifact, such as the Eye or Hand of Vecna, associated with undeath.
- Grant a faithful priest or paladin increased power over undead for a short period of time (an increase of 1–3 effective levels for a day, a week, or the duration of a specific mission).
- Announce a Power's displeasure with a priest who has made injudicious use of *animate dead* spells.

tials find it expedient to reveal themselves in all their majesty (for aasimons, this includes using their *celestial reverence* power) to generate the most profound impact of the message.

In the Long Run

Besides urging characters toward specific quests, celestials can play important ongoing roles in a campaign's development. This is a more common, if less visible, role for celestials to play in the war against evil on the Prime. Most celestials who visit the Prime Material plane, especially those who stay for any length of time, keep their identities veiled and their powers secret. Behind an innocuous veil, celestials guide the faithful and inspire them to greater goodness.

A veiled celestial thus makes an excellent recurring NPC for an epic campaign. The PCs might not learn a celestial's true nature for years, while during that time they (knowingly or unwittingly) help fulfill the celestial's plan and achieve the divine creature's objectives. At the same time, a disguised celestial can play the same role for a single adventure, goading the PCs in a certain direction and then moving on to direct other aspects of the ongoing battle.

Patrons of the (Heroic) Arts

Few adventurers advance far in society or even in their adventuring careers without the assistance of a wealthy patron. Quests of all sorts, particularly for lower-level PCs, often begin with a nobleman or rich merchant offering a reward for recovering a lost treasure, clearing an area of humanoid bandits, or mapping the castle ruins. Such patrons are an important campaign force, and they need not be mortal.

Playing the role of patron has many advantages to the more direct method of sending adventurers on a holy quest, as described above. Perhaps most importantly, it does not attract unwanted attention. If an asuras appears in a blaze of glory and sends a group of adventurers on a quest into the desert, word spreads quickly, and the forces of evil will make their way into the desert to stop the would-be heroes from accomplishing their quest. On the other hand, if an anonymous merchant hands a group of strangers a treasure map and a sack of coins in a crowded barroom, few people think much of it, and the heroes can pursue their mission in relative peace. No one—not even the heroes—needs to know that the merchant who hired them is that same asuras, concealed behind a *polymorph self* spell.

This method of recruitment offers more latitude in terms of the mission itself. The big picture of the conflict between good and evil on the Prime is often too complex for mortals to grasp. Even strange and apparently trivial adventures can play an important role in that conflict, and so much the better for a celestial if she doesn't have to explain all the details to her chosen heroes. If that trumpet archon mentioned earlier really needed someone to go in and weed the Great Temple's garden (perhaps a choke creeper has made the garden impassable), he would probably choose to disguise himself and pay some virtuous mortals to do the job. Similarly, if the quest a celestial has in mind has more to do with a personal vendetta than with advancing the cause of good, it is probably better to let the PCs think they're just involved in a struggle of flesh and blood.

Firre cladrins often pose as heroes' patrons while working covertly on the Prime. They like heroes with artistic ability, particularly bards, and love to hear the tales of adventures completed. They usually appear as bards, using their storytelling ability to inspire goodness in others.

Rebels With a Cause

In regions where evil holds the reins of political power—oppressive autocracies, nightmarish militocracies, even lands under the sway of fiendish invaders—celestials must conduct their activities surreptitiously. Behind enemy lines, as it were, they offer hope to the oppressed and galvanize resistance wherever they can find strong arms and willing hearts. Quietly preaching a gospel of liberation and resistance, they motivate mortals to fight back against the powers of evil in subtle and direct ways. Depending on the circumstances, they might advocate nonviolent resistance, guerrilla warfare, or an armed uprising.

Ghaele eladrins are most commonly found in this role. Their chaotic alignment makes them excellent champions of the oppressed, while their intelligence and martial prowess help them inspire others on and off the battlefield. They often appear as grizzled veterans, old enough to remember better days before the arrival of the evil.

Deus ex Machina

In his forward to the boxed adventure *Return to the Tomb of Horrors*, E. Gary Gygax suggests that players might earn a touch of much-needed divine favor for their PCs by purchasing the adventure for their DMs. One hopes, bribery aside, that all players have a sufficiently friendly relationship with their DMs that the survival of the PCs is a mutually desirable goal. Assuming so, celestial envoys can indeed be a useful means of delivering divine intervention when the PCs need a little help staying alive or accomplishing their goals.

In a fantasy campaign where pantheons of gods have walked the earth and taken a concrete interest in mortal affairs, it is only fair for PCs to assume that the gods they serve should incline an ear when the PCs are in need. If PCs praying for help are fairly high level and faithful to the tenets of their alignment and religion, there is at least a small chance that their deities hear their prayers and respond in some way.

The first-edition *Legends and Lore* book suggests a flat 10% chance that such a prayer is answered, which is certainly a workable mechanic. However, the best way to determine whether a Power

Alyssia, Female Aasimar, 5th-Level Ranger

AL LG; AC 4 (*studded leather* +2, 15 Dexterity); MV 12; hp 25; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6+1; (*quarterstaff* +1) SA Strength, +4 to hit tanar'ri; SD 60' infra-vision, +1 to surprise rolls, +2 to saving throws vs. *charm*- or emotion-related spells; MR 10%; SZ M (5'6" tall); ML Champion (15); XP 2,000.

Str 14, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 11, Wis 17, Cha 13.

Primary Power: Surya (Intermediate/LG/Mount Celestia)

Secondary Power: None

Weapon Proficiencies: Quarterstaff, Longsword, Dagger, Club, Sickle.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Ancient History (10), Animal Lore (11), Local History (13), Mountaineering, Survival (Mountains) (11), and Tracking (18).

Special Attacks/Defenses: Alyssia has chosen tanar'ri as a species enemy. She gains +4 to hit any variety of tanar'ri, but suffers a –4 penalty to reaction rolls in encounters with the foul creatures. Once per day, she can cast *strength* on herself (adding 1d8 points of Strength) or another character. She can Hide in Shadows (41%) and Move Silently (45%) in natural surroundings; her chance is halved in underground or urban settings. She can also modify an animal's reactions. Most of the time, she uses her *quarterstaff* +3 in combat, but she can also attack with her longsword in her right hand and her dagger, club, or sickle in her left without suffering any attack penalties.

Appearance: Alyssia is of medium height and willowy build, sharing the elfin frame of her ghaele ancestor. Her skin has a silvery cast to it, and her blue eyes shine like clear gemstones in the light, but she otherwise appears human, with rounded ears and eyebrows. She wears studded leather armor caked with mud and dust, and usually carries what seems to be an ordinary quarterstaff. Her rustic appearance, however, cannot completely conceal the holy aura that surrounds her.

Personality Traits: Level-headed, trustworthy, bluntly forward, and melancholy.

Roleplaying Notes: Alyssia is the descendant of a ghaele eladrin and a human king. The kingdom of her ancestors has been overrun by fiendish invaders from the Abyss, and Alyssia is one of the key resistance figures. She spends much of her time hiding in the mountains, but she seeks out heroic individuals to help her fight the tanar'ri whenever possible.

In a campaign centered around opposition to the Abyssal tyrants, Alyssia can appear at regular intervals to help the PCs

- Appearing as nothing more than a rustic tracker, Alyssia hires the PCs to perform what seems like a straightforward task. This adventure brings them into conflict with a Knight of the Shadow, a human minion of a tanar'ri lord. The task is insignificant, but serves as a test: if the PCs accomplish their goal, Alyssia knows that they are worthy recruits for her opposition to the tanar'ri.
- Once the PCs have demonstrated their opposition to the tanar'ri and their willingness to defy the tyrants, Alyssia becomes a firm ally in future missions against more powerful tanar'ri. She offers intelligence that she has gathered, both personally and through her network of resistance fighters, to help them defeat a tiefling baronet or an alu-fiend.
- The PCs' success against the tanar'ri makes them wanted criminals, and it becomes prudent for them to lay low for a while. Alyssia offers them refuge in her mountain hideaways and stands beside them as they fight off a hunting party.
- When the PCs reach higher levels, some low-level men-at-arms or other adventurers present themselves to the PCs as henchmen or followers, carrying letters of recommendation from Alyssia. While the PCs have been adventuring, she has continued recruiting fighters for the cause and sends some of her new recruits to aid the PCs.
- In a climactic series of adventures, Alyssia helps the PCs trace the location of an artifact—the holy sword that her ghaele ancestor bestowed upon her royal paramour. Armed with this sacred relic, the PCs can challenge the leader of the tanar'ri and possibly drive the evil from the land.

hears and answers a cry for help is to decide what is best for the adventure. If the alternative is certain death, a better story and a more satisfying conclusion to the adventure is likely to result from some kind of divine intervention. If the PCs have the means at their disposal to overcome the obstacles they face, let them use those means. If they have gotten themselves into dire straits through gross stupidity or immorality (a party faced with an angry town mob after a pocket-picking spree, for example), it is best to let them suffer the consequences of their actions. Likewise, if the PCs have shown no interest in religious activity up to this point, no Power is likely to hear their prayers now.

If you decide that intervention is appropriate, exercise restraint when determining what form it takes. Divine intervention under these circumstances never involves the appearance of a divine avatar. If the PCs are 12th level or higher, very faithful in their service to their deity, and in a truly desperate situation, they might warrant the intervention of a planetar. (The *Planescape Monstrous Compendium Appendix, Volume 1*, suggests a base 5% chance, +1% per level above 12th.) High-level characters who do not meet these qualifications might receive the help of a movanic deva. Other characters generally benefit from the assistance of an agathinon.

Bearing in mind that celestials like mortals to feel empowered and important, envoys sent to help do not necessarily leap right into the fray on the PCs' side. They often remain disguised or invisible, at least upon first arriving, and use spell-like powers such as *aid* and *cure wounds* before offering more concrete assistance. Almost all upper-planar messengers are blessed with very high Intelligence and can quickly assess a situation to provide the assistance the heroes need to overcome their foes. Sometimes they might do nothing until the characters lie unconscious on the battlefield, only to heal their wounds and transport them to a safe resting place, such as a temple of the Power they serve. The priests at that temple might tell the PCs only that "a stranger" brought them in.

High-level characters might occasionally attempt to force divine intervention through the use of a *gate* or similar spell. No such spell can force a deity's avatar to a PC's aid, but a deity might send a powerful minion through the *gate*, either to help or to punish the caster. PCs of sufficient level to cast *gate* are usually worth a Power's notice, and they generally receive the help of a minion powerful enough to handle whatever obstacles they face—a movanic deva or even a planetar.

The intervention of a divine agent is sometimes the best way to steer PCs along the proper course.

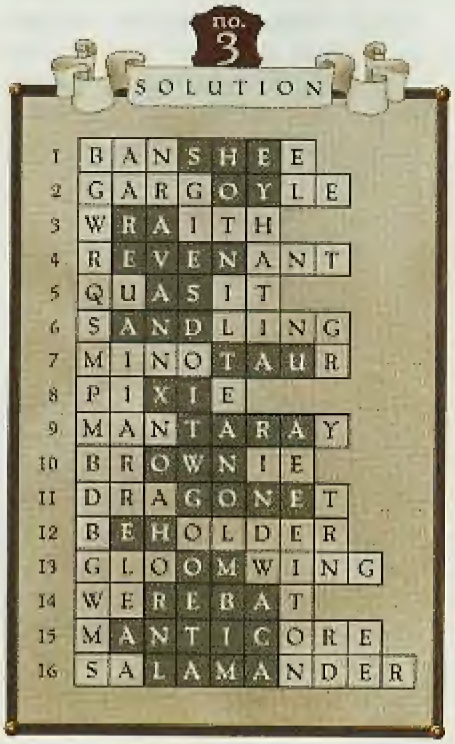
PC spellcasters might use other spells to attract the attention of a divine minion as well. Powers usually assign aasimons or other minions to answer *commune* spells, for example, as well as *divination* and *divine inspiration*. The use of these spells is much less mechanical if the DM roleplays the minion who is assigned to answer the priest's questions.

Even PCs without access to such powerful divination magic can call on the Powers for information or wisdom. This request is fundamentally the same as a prayer for help in battle. If you decide that your story is best served by the PCs' receiving some divine insight, a celestial messenger is an appropriate way to bestow the requested information. The messenger might appear in the PC's dream, or it might assume the form of an ordinary mortal.

Finally, celestials can be the DM's last resort to keep a campaign on track. Players' free will (and willfulness) means that PCs sometimes end up going in directions you never intended or are unprepared to address. Sometimes this is the result of simple misunderstanding, and sometimes players are just perverse. In any case, the intervention of a divine agent is sometimes the best or only way to steer PCs along the proper course. Depending on your players, this intervention can be subtle—as a celestial in disguise drops hints and clues to guide them back on track—or blatant—as a very powerful celestial forces the PCs away from an area they have no business exploring (like the angel with a flaming sword set at the entrance to the garden of Eden). Just bear in mind that players and PCs alike do not enjoy being led by the nose—as much as possible, let them choose their own course.

Divine messengers are a useful tool for the DM—one among many. If every adventure begins with an asuras appearing in a blaze of glory, the experience is cheapened, and if a solar with a flaming sword appears at every wrong turn to steer the PCs back on course, the players feel cheated. Used in moderation, however, celestial envoys can add a depth and richness to your campaign, helping the players to feel that their characters are part of something important, that they are key figures in the cosmic struggle between good and evil.

The primary agents of divine intervention in James' life are his wife, Amy, and son, Carter.



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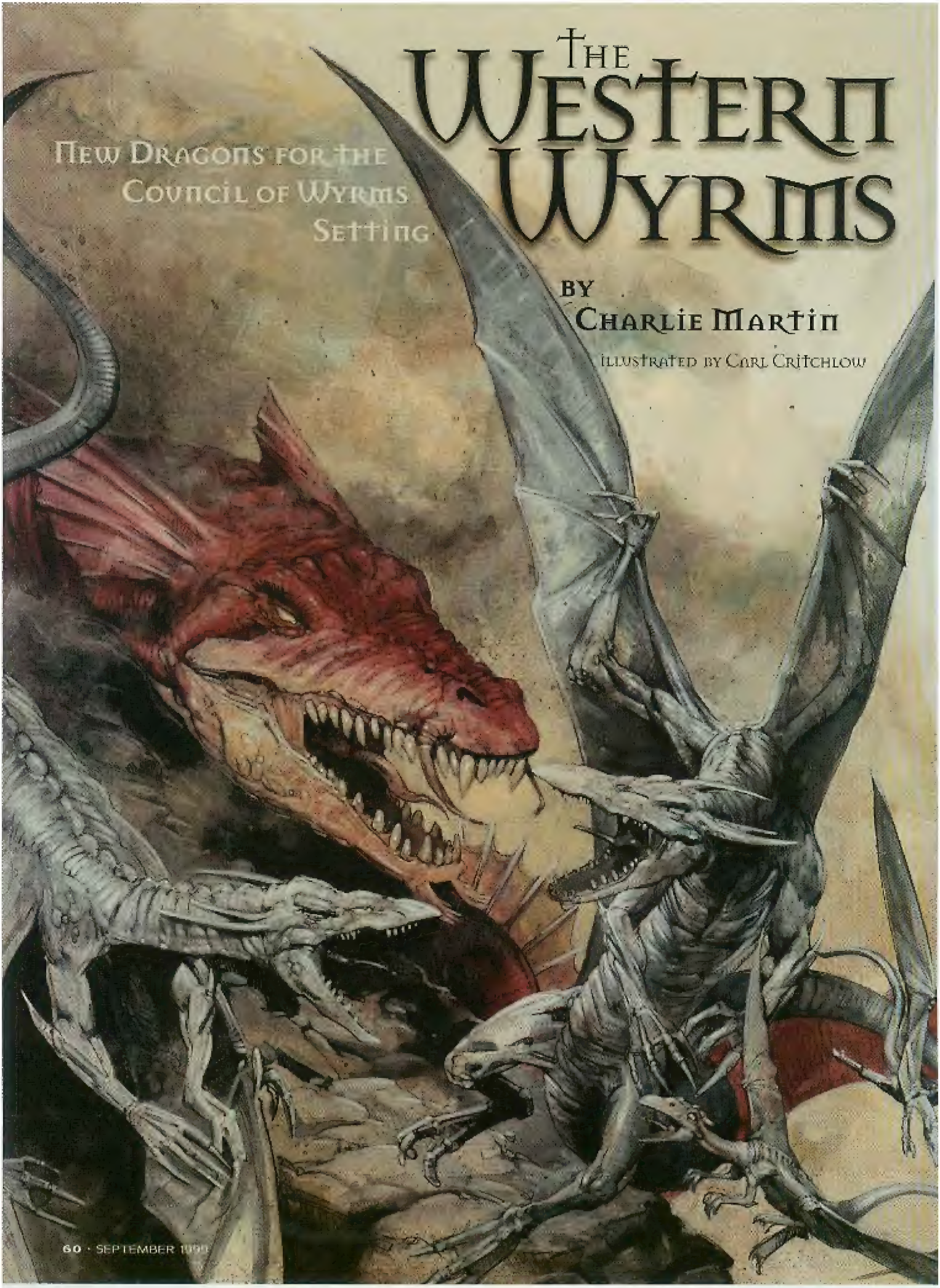
DMDA98

The Western Wyrms

New Dragons for the Council of Wyrms Setting

by Charlie Martin

illustrated by Carl Critchlow



GREAT IO, the Ninefold Dragon, strove for centuries to halt the wars among his children, but to no avail. Although the Council of Wyrms established a tentative peace among the metallic, gem, and chromatic dragons, certain lesser wyrms fought on, heedless of the wisdom of their betters. Ultimately, the Council of Wyrms banished these rebel wyrms from Io's Blood Isles.

—From the teachings of Auryum Goldstar, 521st year of the 36th Cycle

The *Council of Wyrms* campaign, revised and republished this month, introduces Io's Blood Isles, a land in which dragons rule, served by their human and demihuman "kindred." These dragons care little for the outside world, but human-controlled lands exist, far to the west. There, the "lesser species" defend their kingdoms from constant attacks, their dragon slayers honing their skills for the inevitable confrontation with the dragon isles. Even in the west, however, so-called lesser dragons exert their influence.

These western wyrms resemble the traditional dragons of most AD&D® campaigns. Hatchlings grow up with their parents, rather than benefiting from the teachings of dozens of demihuman kindred and adult dragons. Fully grown dragons think nothing of slaying one another in these kingdoms. Some, such as the steel dragons, even go so far as to associate with humans, fashioning themselves as protectors of the weaker species.

THE WYRMS OF THE WEST

The western dragons come in several varieties, all but unknown to the powerful dragons of the east. They include the cloud, deep, mercury, mist, shadow, steel, and yellow dragons.

Tables 1–7 provide all the information needed to play these seven dragon types as player characters. Those seeking role-playing suggestions for these dragons should consult the Habitat/Society and Ecology sections of the dragons' individual *MONSTROUS MANUAL*™ entries.

ROGUE DRAGONS

Three of the seven main *Council of Wyrms* dragon races are inherently evil and thus not recommended as PCs. Those who wish to play such a dragon might like to play a good-aligned rogue dragon.

Dragons who rebel against their species' attitudes find themselves tolerated at best, persecuted at worst. A shift in the dragon's views of law, neutrality, and chaos is least offensive to other dragons of the same type. In such cases, the subrace of the PC is a significant factor. The open-minded steel wyrms, for instance, display more tolerance toward a neutral good rogue than would the fell deep dragons. In many cases, however, such a rogue dragon is considered merely an eccentric, not a rebel.

Rogue dragons who make a more drastic alignment shift, such as a good-aligned shadow

TABLE 1: RACIAL ABILITY REQUIREMENTS

	Cloud	Deep	Mercury	Mist	Shadow	Steel	Yellow
Str	7/23	7/23	4/20	4/20	5/21	4/20	6/22
Dex	3/14	3/15	6/18	5/15	5/16	3/15	3/17
Con	5/18	5/18	3/18	3/18	3/18	3/18	4/18
Int	6/21	5/20	3/18	3/18	3/18	3/18	3/17
Wis	3/18	3/18	3/18	3/18	3/18	3/18	3/18
Cha	7/21	5/19	5/19	4/18	4/18	6/20	4/19

The above minimum and maximum values cannot be changed, although a dragon may gain or lose ability points through spell effects and certain magical items, such as a tome of clear thought. In such cases, the ability score ranges can be ignored.

TABLE 2: RACIAL ABILITY ADJUSTMENTS

	Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
Cloud	+5	–4	—	+3	—	+3
Deep	+5	–3	—	+2	—	+1
Mercury	+2	—	—	+1	—	+1
Mist	+2	–3	—	+2	—	—
Shadow	+2	–3	—	+3	—	—
Steel	+2	–3	—	+4	—	+2
Yellow	+4	–1	—	—	—	+1

TABLE 3: RACIAL CLASS AND LEVEL LIMITS

	Dragon PC	Dragon-Priest	Dragon-Mage
Cloud	12	12	12
Deep	12	12	12
Mercury	12	12	12
Mist	12	12	12
Shadow	12	12	12
Steel	12	12	12
Yellow	12	—	12

None of the above dragons may normally become dragon-psionicists or possess psionic abilities.

To determine the abilities and powers of the dragon PC at each level, refer to the entries in the MONSTROUS MANUAL *tome.*

TABLE 4: PREFERRED KINDRED

	Elf	Dwarf	Gnome
Cloud	Preferred	Rare	Rare
Deep	Never	Preferred	Rare
Mercury	Rare	Rare	Preferred
Mist	Preferred	Never	Rare
Shadow	Rare	Preferred	Rare
Steel	—	—	—
Yellow	Never	Preferred	Rare

Table 5: XP & Advancement

Shadow Dragon

Level	XP Required	HD
H	0	6
1	64,000	6
2	250,000	8
3	750,000	10
4	1,250,000	12
5	1,500,000	13
6	1,750,000	14
7	2,000,000	15
8	2,250,000	16
9	2,500,000	17
10	2,750,000	18
11	3,000,000	19
12	3,250,000	20

Deep, Mist & Steel Dragon

Level	XP Required	HD
H	0	5
1	16,000	5
2	64,000	7
3	250,000	9
4	750,000	11
5	1,000,000	12
6	1,250,000	13
7	1,500,000	14
8	1,750,000	15
9	2,000,000	16
10	2,250,000	17
11	2,500,000	18
12	2,750,000	19

Cloud Dragon

Level	XP Required	HD
H	0	8
1	32,000	8
2	125,000	10
3	500,000	12
4	1,000,000	14
5	1,250,000	15
6	1,500,000	16
7	1,750,000	17
8	2,000,000	18
9	2,250,000	19
10	2,500,000	20
11	2,750,000	21
12	3,000,000	22

Mercury & Yellow Dragon

Level	XP Required	HD
H	0	5/7
1	12,000	5/7
2	64,000	7/9
3	250,000	9/11
4	750,000	11/13
5	1,000,000	12/14
6	1,250,000	13/15
7	1,500,000	14/16
8	1,750,000	15/17
9	2,000,000	16/18
10	2,250,000	17/19
11	2,500,000	18/20
12	2,750,000	19/21

dragon, are especially rare and almost never tolerated by others of their type. The only exceptions are dragons that can have more than one alignment, such as steel dragons, who tend toward lawful neutrality but might be lawful good. Among most dragons, however, radical alignments are intolerable to their kin. Such rogues are shunned by their brethren, while other dragons—even those of the rogue's alignment—almost always find themselves unable to look past the color of the rogue's scales.

Rogue wyrms who openly oppose the plans of their clan leaders usually end up dead or exiled. A lucky rogue might be drawn under the wings of (eccentric or insane) elders sympathetic to the youngster's plight.

Rogues who endanger other dragons are feared and hated by all dragons. These renegades are more common in the west than in the Blood Isles, especially among old and powerful wyrms who think of themselves as invincible. Most dragons avoid these creatures, while some find the courage to challenge the them. In either case, the rogue remains a threat until death.

Destructive rogues make excellent targets for human or demihuman dragon slayers. Such warriors will either kill the

Table 6: Dragon Proficiency Slots

Combat Proficiencies/Noncombat Proficiencies

	Initial	#/Level	Penalty	Initial	#/Level
Cloud	4	2/3	–5	3	3/2
Deep	5	2/3	–4	3	1
Mercury	4	2/3	–5	3	1
Mist	4	2/3	–5	4	3/2
Shadow	4	2/3	–4	3	1
Steel	4	2/3	–5	4	3/2
Yellow	5	2/3	–3	2	1

Table 7: Bonus Proficiencies

	Bonus Proficiency
Cloud	Weather Sense
Deep	Direction Sense
Mercury	Gaming
Mist	Swimming
Shadow	Appraising
Steel	Modern Language
Yellow	Survival (Desert)

Bonus proficiencies are received for free at 1st level, regardless of whether hatchling-level characters can purchase the proficiency. If the PC has already bought the given skill, the wyrm gains a +2 bonus to the proficiency checks.

rogue outright or attempt to use the wyrm against other dragons. These options should not be open to dragon PCs at the start of a campaign, although they could end up like this variety of rogue through long adventuring, extensive roleplaying, and more than a few misfortunes.

Other Dragons of the West

The lands of the west are vast and diverse. Despite the many options and races fit for play above, characters might wish to play other draconic races in this new area. DMs should feel free to extrapolate from the rules in *Council of Wyrms* and this article to expand the PC options even further.

Dragons from the eastern lands of Io's Island Chain might be allowed at the DM's option. After all, Io gave the world to his dragons, and with their vast abilities, they can easily travel far from the Council of Wyrms. Should they come to the west, such dragons are likely to face persecution. The wyrms of the west probably avoid the easterners or attack them in remembrance of the punishment they received so long ago. Humans will see the arrival of such wyrms as an attack from the east and will probably respond with a dragon hunt, purging the area of the threat. The dragon slayers believe that the eastern wyrms should stay where they are; the western lands were obviously meant for humans. In addition, the fact that Io's first children have even more power and abilities than the western dragons could inspire panic among humans and western dragons alike.

Charlie Martin has just turned eighteen and graduated from the St. Johnsbury Academy. Of over three hundred articles and proposals submitted to various game magazines, this is his fifth publication.

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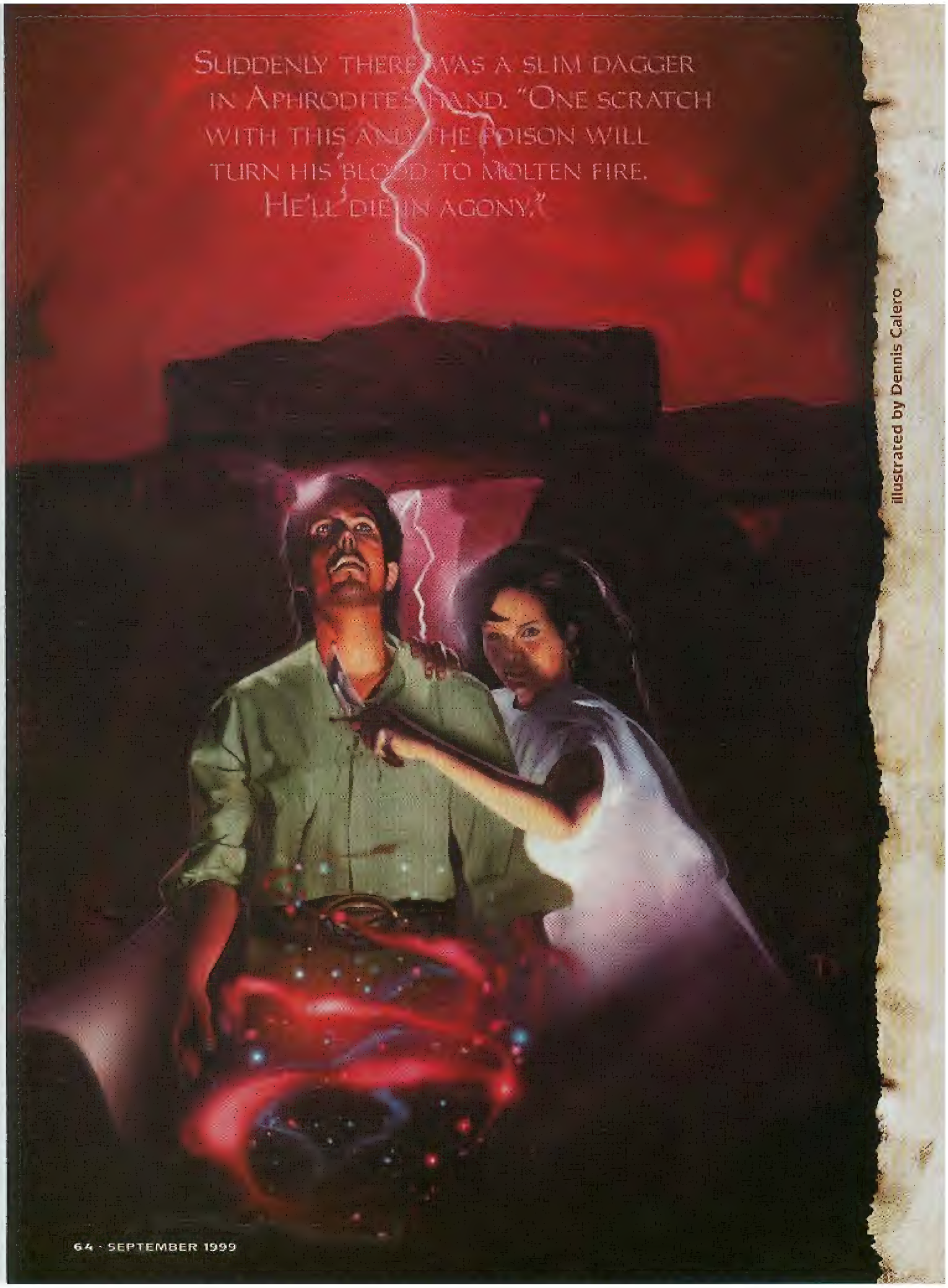

illustrated by Dennis Calero

Fiction by
Ben Bova

Dux Bellorum

They attacked us while we were sleeping.

It was our second night on the hard journey from Amesbury to the High King's castle, and we were all weary, bone tired. That morning we had been forced to turn off the good Roman road that led arrow-straight to Salisbury and plunged into a thick, dark forest that seemed endless.

After hours of walking our horses through the lofty, thick-boled trees, hardly seeing the sun through their dense canopies, Arthur decided to make camp in a small clearing.

"We'll reach Cadbury castle tomorrow," he said, trying to cheer his eighteen knights as they sat on the mossy ground.

Their squires—me included—were tending the horses while the half-dozen churls Arthur had brought with us were busy gathering firewood and preparing to cook the salted meat and dried beans that the pack horses carried.

It was the end of summer, the end of the long months of fighting against the Saxons and Angles and other barbarian tribes who had invaded Britain. Arthur had won a great victory over them at Amesbury, and the High King had summoned his young nephew to his castle at Cadbury.

The attack that night was meant to kill Arthur.

We were sleeping soundly, even I, who needs very little sleep normally. But the exertions of the battle and the long wearying days of painfully slow travel across the hilly, forested land had made even me drowsy.

I dreamed of Anya.

It was more than a dream. I was with her, the goddess whom I loved, the Creator who loved me. For only a few moments I stood in another world, another dimension, on a grassy hill warm with sunshine where flowers nodded in the gentle breeze from the nearby sea. Soft puffs of clouds scudded across a brilliant blue sky. In the distance, where the hill sloped down to a wide sandy beach, there stood a magnificent city filled with gigantic monuments and graceful temples.

But the city was empty, lifeless. It was the city of the Creators, I knew, the beings who traveled through time to manipulate human history to suit their whims.

Anya was the only one of the Creators who cared about humankind. She loved me, this supernally beautiful woman of the lustrous sable-black hair and fathomless gray eyes. In other times she had been worshiped as Athena, Isis, Artemis. I had given my life for her, more than once.

She stood before me on that sun-dappled hillside, draped in a supple robe of silver threads. I reached out to her, but she raised a warning hand.

"Awake, Orion," she said, her voice urgent, her lovely face intent with alarm. "Arthur has been betrayed."

My eyes popped open. I was back in the clearing in the forest, hardly a moonbeam breaking through the dark canopy of the trees. Our fire was down to feeble embers. I didn't move a muscle. A chill wind sighed through the boughs so high above. An owl hooted once, then again.

It was no owl, I realized. Men were creeping around our little camp, surrounding us.

Furtively, I reached for the sword that lay at my side. My eyes adjusted to the dim light of our fire's embers, and I could see the shadowy shapes of the attackers edging closer to Arthur's sleeping men.

"To arms!" I bellowed at the top of my voice, leaping to my feet, sword in hand. "Saxons!"

There were at least forty of them. I ran straight at the nearest ones, a trio of burly men gripping long two-handed swords. My senses went into overdrive; the action before me seemed to slow down, as if time itself had suddenly altered, stretching like taffy into a languid dreamlike pace.

Out of the corner of my eye I could see Arthur and his knights rousing themselves. Men were shouting, cursing, and someone screamed his death agony.

All this as the three before me braced themselves and raised their heavy swords against me. I dove headfirst into the nearest one, leaving my feet entirely in a leap that buried the point of my sword in his chest. We toppled to the ground together, his blood fountaining as I yanked my sword out of him and rolled away from a mighty two-handed clout that would have cleaved me in two if it had landed on me.

Scrambling to my feet, I sliced the villain through his throat before he could swing at me again. He crumpled, gurgling blood, as I danced away from the powerful swing of his companion, then took off both his hands with a single blow to his wrists. He shrieked, wide-eyed with pain and terror, as his sword fell to the ground with both his hands still gripping it.

Leaving him, I turned to see that Arthur's knights were giving a good account of themselves. Without shields or

helmets, without even their chain mail, they still were hacking through the attackers with grim efficiency.

I saw one of the attackers standing off, lurking beside the massive bole of a rough-barked tree. Their leader, I thought, and raced toward him. He saw me and turned to flee.

I hefted my sword and threw it at him. It was a clumsy throw, and the sword hit with the flat of the blade between his shoulders. The impact was enough to send him sprawling, but by the time I reached him he was scrambling to his feet, his own sword in his right hand and my sword in his left.

He grinned at me like a wolf. "Now you die, fool."

I reached for the dagger I always kept strapped to my thigh, the dagger that Odysseos had given me in the Greek camp on the shore of Ilium. Not much against two swords, but better than my bare hands.

Behind me I heard the din of battle: swords clanging, men screaming in pain, even the panicked horses neighing and stomping, trying to break their tethers and run away from this bloody mayhem.

He advanced upon me, waving his two swords as if trying to hypnotize me. I watched him, my supercharged senses studying every bunching of his muscles, every movement of his eyes. He was stalking me, still grinning confidently.

I flipped the dagger in my hand so that I held it by the point and, before he could think to move, hurled it into his chest. It hit him with a solid thunk, and he staggered. The confident grin faded. His mouth filled with blood. He tried to step toward me, tried to reach me with the swords, but his legs had no strength in them. He collapsed face-first at my feet, driving my dagger even deeper into his chest.

By the time I had retrieved both my sword and dagger and cleaned them, Arthur, Bors and Gawain had joined me.

"Your warning saved us," Arthur said, still breathing hard.

Gawain's chest was heaving, too. "A few of them ran off into the woods, but thirty or so will never leave this clearing."

I nodded. My senses had calmed down to normal. "Did we lose anyone?" I asked.

Bors answered gruffly, "Not a one. Two of the churls were cut down, and several men are wounded, but that's all."

Obviously Sir Bors did not consider laborers to be worth counting as real men.

Arthur asked, "These knaves were not Saxons. They were Celts, as we are. Why attack us?"

"Robbers," said Gawain. "A band of robbers who thought they saw easy pickings."

"Attacking armed knights?" I asked. "And an equal number of squires? Robbers are not so bold."

"Eighteen sleeping knights," said Gawain.

Arthur added, with a smile, "And most squires are not fighters of your caliber, Orion."

Bors bent down to examine the dead man at our feet. "This one was no common robber, my lord," he said to Arthur.

"What makes you say that?" Gawain challenged.

"I know this face. He was a man-at-arms at Cadbury castle."

Arthur stared at Bors, dumbfounded. "He served my uncle Ambrosius?"

Bors nodded grimly. "Look here. He still wears the High King's crest on his tunic."

"Treachery," Gawain whispered.

With a shake of his head, Arthur said in a low, hollow voice, "I can't believe that my uncle would send these rogues upon us. Why would he do so?"

"Jealousy, my lord," answered Sir Bors. "Your victory at Amesbury gives the High King pause. He fears for his throne."

"But I would never…" Arthur seemed thoroughly shocked. "He knows I would never seek his crown."

"Does he, my lord?" Bors replied. "I wonder."

• • •

The next day was sultry, the last touch of summer that we would see that year. Our little column of mounted knights and squires climbed the steep dusty road slowly, the horses tired, the men sweating and too weary even to grumble about the long journey or the hot sun blazing out of the cloudless sky.

I rode beside young Arthur, as a squire should. Usually Arthur was bright and eager, full of youthful enthusiasm, but this day he was quiet, thinking about the treachery of the night before. The tunic he wore over his chain mail was covered with dust, stained with sweat. His light brown hair flowed past his shoulders, his blue eyes that usually sparkled with dreams of glory seemed to be focused elsewhere, looking for answers they could not find. Unconsciously, he scratched at his bristly beard. It was coming in nicely, but it must have been itchy.

"I wish Merlin were with us," he said, with a sigh. "I miss his advice."

We had left the old wizard behind at Amesbury; too frail to make the trip with us, he would be coming later by wagon, with the arms and other spoils from the battle Arthur had won.

"Merlin is very wise," I said.

"He prophesied I would win a great victory, and he was right," Arthur said. He treated me more as a friend than a squire, and often unburdened his inner thoughts to me.

His uncle, the High King, had given Arthur charge of the little hilltop fort at Amesbury. Instead of remaining inside its wooden palisade, Arthur had sallied out with his knights and routed the barbarian horde that was besieging the fort.

"It was a great victory, wasn't it?" he said, smiling at the memory of it.

"Indeed it was, my lord."

"Thanks to you, Orion."

I had shown Arthur and his knights how to make stirrups and spurs. The knights had laughed at my "inventions," but Arthur took them seriously, saw what they could do. With stirrups to hold us firmly on our mounts, we charged the surprised barbarians and smashed them so badly that those who were not killed fled shrieking for their lives.

"You led the charge, my lord," I said to Arthur. "It was your vision and courage that convinced the knights to accept the new ideas."

Arthur nodded, his face going somber. "Now I must convince the High King."

He had concocted a plan to drive the Saxons and all the other barbarian tribes completely out of Britain. Only three men knew of it, so far: Arthur, Merlin, and myself. It was a plan that could work, I thought, if Ambrosius was willing to accept it and was not already fearful that Arthur threatened his position as High King.

There was one other obstacle in Arthur's path, as well: me. I had been sent to this time and place to prevent Arthur from defeating the barbarians who were invading Britain. To assassinate him if his enemies didn't kill him first.

"Look!" Arthur stood in his stirrups and pointed. "Cadbury castle!"

It stood at the crest of the steep hill we were tediously climbing. Cadbury was a real castle, built of stone, not one of the rude wooden hill forts that Ambrosius had strung along the countryside to contain the Saxon invasion.

"It must have been built by giants," he said, staring at the high wall and the towers rising above it.

"No," I said. "It was built by men."

"But Orion, mortal men could never lift such stones! Look at them! It's impossible."

I had scaled the beetling walls of Troy and helped to burn the fabled towers of Ilium. I had tried to defend triple-walled Byzantium against the ferocious Turks. Cadbury was nothing compared to them, but to this eager young knight it was the grandest architecture he had ever seen.

"Roman engineers built most of it," I told Arthur. "The High King's stonecrafters have added to it."

He refused to believe such a mundane explanation. Arthur was barely out of his teens, full of the naivete and credulous innocence of wide-eyed youth.

"Not even the Romans could have built so high without the aid of the gods," he said. Then he crossed himself.

I held my tongue. If he knew what the gods truly were, he would weep in shocked disillusion.

"Look, Orion!" he shouted. "Ambrosius himself is at the parapet to welcome us!"

It was true. The flags of the High King snapped briskly in the hot breeze up on the crenelations atop Cadbury's main gate. The drawbridge was down, and through the open gate I could see that the castle's courtyard was thronged with people. If Ambrosius had truly sent those scoundrels to murder Arthur, why would he be waiting at his castle's main gate with pennants flying?

I thought I knew the answer. The would-be murderers had been sent by Aten, the Golden One who created me to be his Hunter, his warrior and assassin. He knew I was resisting his commands to kill Arthur, so he arranged the previous night's attack. Even though it had failed, it had opened a wound of suspicion between the High King and his young nephew.

Arthur spurred his mount lightly and trotted up the steep, dusty road, eager to reach the castle. I urged my horse forward, to be close enough to protect Arthur if the need arose. He had no idea that the gods he dreamed of wanted to kill him, no idea that I was defying those so-called gods to protect him.

How could I explain to him that the gods he imagined were my Creators, descendants of the human race from the far future, powerful enough to travel through time, to bend the currents of the continuum to their whim. I had been created by one of them, Aten, cruel and half-mad with the lust for power. The Creators squabbled among themselves like spoiled children, and their disputes were settled by the blood of mortal men and women.

I have fought and killed for Aten on countless missions across spacetime, from cave-dwelling tribes to fleets of starships. I have died many times, yet each time he revives me for another grisly task of battle or murder.

He had sent me to this placetime, to be by Arthur's side. At first I had thought that Aten wanted me to help Arthur succeed in his dream of uniting the Celts so they could drive the Saxons and Angles and other barbarian invaders from the shores of Britain. But no, Aten's true purpose was to use Arthur briefly then destroy him like a toy that no longer pleased him. And I was to be his assassin, if all else failed.

"My uncle Ambrosius waits to greet us," Arthur said as I pulled up beside him. His handsome face was wreathed in a brilliant smile.

"You see? The word of your victory at Amesbury has pleased him," I said.

"Yes, perhaps so," Arthur agreed.

I glanced up at the flapping banners atop the open castle gate. I could see a group of men standing there, watching our approach. One of them must have been Ambrosius, Arthur's uncle, High King of the British Celts.

Arthur's eyes followed my gaze, but I heard him muttering, "We can drive the barbarians completely out of Britain, drive them away for good—if only Ambrosius will trust my plan."

"He will, my lord, I'm sure," I said.

Arthur nodded, but it was obvious that his thoughts had turned elsewhere. We rode along in silence up the switchbacks of the road, climbing the hill on which Cadbury castle was sited.

"What do you think of the castle, Orion?" Arthur asked at last. "Have you ever seen such mighty walls, such high towers?"

I smiled and kept the truth to myself. "It would be difficult to take by storm, my lord."

"Difficult!" He laughed, a youthful, boyish laugh. "I could defend Cadbury against all the barbarian hordes for a hundred years!"

No, I thought. You won't be allowed to live that long.

• • •

Dux Bellorum

Ambrosius styled himself High King of the Britons, which meant that many of the petty kingdoms of the isle professed allegiance to him. He had earned that fealty by battling the Saxons and the other invading tribes for many years, building the string of hilltop forts such as Amesbury in the hope of holding the invading barbarians to their beachheads and not allowing them to penetrate into the heartland of Britain.

He had fought other Celts, as well. Celtic Britain was a patchwork of petty "kingdoms," each ruler jealous of his neighbors, suspicious of the kingdom over the next hill. When the Romans ruled Britain, the tribes had all bowed to Roman law. But once the legions were withdrawn, the very year that Rome itself was sacked by the Visigoths, the Celts swiftly reverted to their paltry rivalries.

Like his father before him, the Elder Ambrosius, this High King had won his shaky allegiances as much by the power of his sword over his fellow Celts as the need for all the Celts to unite against the invaders. The allegiances sworn to him were grudging, at best. Only a High King of inflexible will and exceptional power could keep the lesser kings loyal to him.

Now, as we assembled in the castle's great hall to have audience with the High King, I saw that Ambrosius Aurelianus—as he styled himself—was getting old. His lifelong struggles against the Saxons and his own Celtic neighbors had taken its toll. He had once been tall and stately, I could see, but the weight of responsibility had bent him and stooped his once-broad shoulders even though he tried to appear dignified in his royal fur-trimmed robes. His hair and beard were gray, nearly white, and thinning noticeably; his face had the pallor of approaching death already upon it.

In contrast, Arthur was strong and straight and vital, practically glowing with youth and bursting with confidence and enthusiasm about the future.

We had all washed off the dust of our journey from Amesbury before this audience with the High King. Sir Bors had teased me, as usual, in his rough way: "Pity the wash bowl isn't big enough for you to sit in, Orion," he had said, with mock seriousness. "We all know how you like to bathe yourself, like a fish."

The other knights had laughed uproariously. My cleanliness was a subject of much humor among them.

But we were all scrubbed, beards and hair trimmed neatly, and wearing our best tunics for Ambrosius. Even young Lancelot, his battle-earned knighthood scarcely a month old, had dressed in his finest Breton linen for this exalted moment.

The audience was largely ceremonial, however. Ambrosius received us in the great hall, with half the castle's inhabitants thronging the room. The women wore long gowns of rich fabrics, decked with gems and pearls. None of the men wore mail, although they each carried their favorite sword at the hip, many of the scabbards more heavily jeweled than the women.

"A pretty bunch of dandies," Sir Bors growled under his breath. "They'd be useless in a fight."

The hall itself was almost as large as Priam's court in old Troy. Long embroidered tapestries covered most of the rough stone walls, some of them not yet finished, their pictures of battles and hunts incomplete, lacking. Late afternoon sunlight streamed into the hall through the windows set high in the walls. It would take hundreds of candles to light this chamber at night, I thought.

The High King walked slowly, stiffly, through the bowing crowd. A woman walked beside him, dressed all in black and so heavily veiled that we could not see her face. She seemed youthfully slim beneath her floor-length skirts. She kept her gloved hands at her sides. She did not take Ambrosius' arm or touch him in any way. Indeed, he seemed to keep apart from her quite deliberately.

Ambrosius sat wearily upon his hard throne of carved dark wood. The mysterious woman remained standing off to one side. The High King welcomed his nephew and thanked Arthur in a thin, parched voice for driving the barbarians from Amesbury fort. Arthur knelt and kissed the High King's hand, then rose to his feet.

"My lord," he said, in a clear tenor voice that carried across the room, "we can drive the Saxons completely out of Britain, if you will allow it."

I was well away from the throne, standing behind Bors and Gawain and the other knights, among the squires, but I could see Ambrosius' eyes shift momentarily toward the veiled woman.

"We will speak of this another time," Ambrosius said. "This day is to be given to feasting and celebration, and to prayers of thanks for your great victory."

Arthur wanted to insist. "But my lord—"

Ambrosius silenced him by lifting a hand.

"In addition," the High King said, "it is my wish to introduce you to another visitor to this court."

He turned toward the woman in black. She stepped forward, still veiled so heavily her face was impossible to see.

"This is the princess Morganna," said Ambrosius, "of the kingdom of Bernicia, far to the north."

Morganna reached up with both her hands, lifted the veil from her face, and let it drop back over her shoulders. A sigh swept through the great hall. She was the most fabulously beautiful woman any of them had ever seen: hair as dark as a stormy midnight, eyes that glowed like sapphires, skin as white as alabaster.

I had seen her before. I knew who she was. Among the Creators she called herself Aphrodite.

• • •

For the next two days—and nights—Arthur spent every moment with Morganna. He was infatuated with her, besotted as only a young man can be.

"She's enchanted him, all right," said Sir Bors, chuckling.

I had sought Bors out, worried that Arthur was being turned away from speaking to the High King about his plan to drive

the Saxons and all the other barbarians out of Britain for good. Bors had made himself at home in one of the castle's many private chambers, a room so near the stables that I could smell the horses. But to Bors it was almost sinfully luxurious, with a feather bed and serving wenches at his beck and call.

"And why not?" he added. "The lad's done well enough. Why shouldn't the High King give him a princess to wed? It makes political sense, Orion, tying Bernicia to Ambrosius' domains here in the south."

"But Arthur's plan ..."

Bors grunted. "It'll keep. Winter's coming; there'll be no campaigning for months."

"The Saxons will use those months to fortify their bases," I said.

"Can't be helped. No man can outfight the weather." Bors hefted a flagon. "Relax, Orion. Enjoy the fruits of victory. Have some wine. Find yourself a wench or two."

It was tempting. Too tempting. Ambrosius was blunting Arthur's purpose with the luxuries of his castle. Wine, women, and winter were going to delay Arthur's plan, perhaps fatally. Or was this Aten's doing?

"Thank you, my lord," I replied to Bors. "Perhaps later."

He laughed and poured himself a mug. I bowed and took my leave of him.

"Find yourself a wench or two," Bors repeated as I stepped through the heavy oaken door of his chamber. I could hear his thick laughter even after I closed the door.

I thought of Anya, the goddess I loved. How could any mortal woman compare to her? Yet the temptation was there.

• • •

That night, as I lay on my straw pallet among the snores and stinks of the other squires, I tried to make contact with Anya. I needed her help, her guidance, her warmth and love. Squeezing my eyes shut, clenching my fists with the effort of it, I strained every atom of my being to translate myself into the realm of the Creators.

And found myself, instead, in the middle of the night out on a windy plain. I had not traveled that far. Looming all around me were the giant megaliths of the stone circle of Salisbury.

I immediately recognized the place; in another lifetime I had helped the Stone Age tribes of this region build this site. They were just beginning to turn from hunting to agriculture, and my goal had been to help them predict the seasons so they would know when to plant their crops. Ever since, though, Stonehenge was revered with awe as a religious site. The Druids had conducted human sacrifices here until the Romans stamped out the practice. I wondered if they had returned to their bloody ways, now that the Romans were gone.

Black clouds were boiling across the sky, blotting out the moon and stars. Forks of lightning flickered in the distance. A storm was coming, driven by the wind that scattered the dry leaves and set the trees to moaning. In the blue-white glare of a lightning strike I saw that two people were approaching the center of the ring, where I stood beside the sacrificial altar. A man and a woman. I could not make out their faces, but I knew who they were.

"Orion, is that you?" Arthur's voice.

"Yes, my lord."

I could see now that the woman walking beside him was Morganna—Aphrodite, as I knew her.

He lifted both his arms and swung around, pointing at the immense stones rising all about us.

"Don't tell me that this was built by mortals," he said, his voice a mixture of awe and delight.

I said nothing. In centuries to come, I knew, men would claim that extraterrestrial visitors built Stonehenge. How little they believed in themselves!

"How did you get here?" Arthur asked.

"The same way you did," I replied, looking at Aphrodite.

Suddenly he seemed embarrassed, as sheepish as a lad caught in a misdeed.

"Morganna brings us here every night," he said, his voice dropping almost to a whisper against the gusting cold wind. "By magic."

Another lightning bolt cracked the black sky, etching her incredible face in cold white brilliance for a flash of a moment. I could see she was not pleased.

Even in fury she was matchlessly beautiful. Her eyes, which had been as richly blue as sapphires when I'd seen her at Ambrosius' court, were emerald-green now. Instead of the heavy stiff gown she'd worn then, she was clad now in a long white hooded robe which left her lovely arms bare. The hood was down, and her hair cascaded past her soft shoulders like a stream of flowing ebony.

"How dare you?" she spat.

I glanced at Arthur. He was standing absolutely still, frozen in time, as if he'd been turned into a statue. She had put him in stasis, I realized, so she could deal with me.

"You mean to murder him, don't you?" I accused.

"He will experience pleasure enough before he dies," Aphrodite said, gesturing to the dark stone altar. I saw that a groove had been chiselled into it, to carry away the blood of the sacrificial victims.

"I'm here to protect him," I said.

"Aten told me you've become troublesome," she said carelessly. "Then the Druids will have two victims this night."

I was unarmed, except for the dagger strapped to my thigh. I tried to reach for it, but found that I was frozen, too, unable to move a muscle.

Thunder rolled across the dark sky. Aphrodite laughed. "You would defy Aten, Orion? How foolish of you. Tonight you die the final death. There will be no revival for you."

I strained with every speck of energy I possessed, but could do nothing. I was imprisoned totally.

Smiling like a cobra, Aphrodite stepped to me and twined her bare arms around my neck. "I could make you very happy, Orion, if only you wouldn't resist me. Forget your

Anya and love me, Orion, and you can live in paradise forever."

Only one word could force its way past my lips. "No."

Her smile turned cold. Beyond her, off in the hilly distance, I could make out a procession of torches heading toward us, their flames guttering in the blustery wind. The Druids, come for their sacrificial rite.

"You choose Anya over me?" Aphrodite hissed. "Then after you watch Arthur die, you yourself will be killed. Slowly."

She turned away from me. Arthur stirred to life.

"Where is Orion?" he asked, puzzled, looking right at me but not seeing me at all.

"Gone," Aphrodite said, with a shrug of her lovely shoulders. "Forget about him. Come with me, my love, now that we're alone."

She took his hand and led him toward the altar. I stood there, invisible to Arthur, unable to move, hardly able to breathe. I felt an icy chill creeping over my body, as if I were being submerged in a glacier. I recalled one of my deaths, deep in space, slowly freezing until my heart stopped beating.

And the torchlit procession of the Druids marched steadily closer.

Lightning flashed again, and thunder boomed. Rain began to pelt down, but it didn't strike Arthur and Aphrodite; she was shielding them somehow.

A titanic crack of lightning struck the ground almost at my feet, blinding me for several moments. When I could see again, Anya stood at my side, dressed as she had been when she'd given Arthur his sword, Excalibur, in a flowing silver robe garlanded with flowers.

Arthur's eyes went wide. "Look, Morganna!" he cried. "It's the Lady of the Lake."

Aphrodite/Morganna whirled to face Anya, surprise and rage on her exquisite face. Two goddesses, each divinely beautiful but in very different ways. Aphrodite was all flame and passion, the embodiment of sexual allure. Anya, who had been worshiped as Athena in another age, was cool and calm, certain of her strength.

"It's time for you to leave," Anya said.

"Never!" spat Aphrodite. "He's mine! You can't have him."

"Arthur is under my protection. You cannot harm him."

"You think not?" Suddenly there was a slim dagger in Aphrodite's hand. "One scratch with this and the poison will turn his blood to molten fire. He'll die in agony."

Anya did not move. Arthur stood goggle-eyed, too close to Aphrodite and that poison-laden dagger to try to move away.

"You can't defy Aten's desires," Aphrodite said, smirking. "Not even you can get away with that."

"Can't I?" Anya replied.

Another lightning bolt crackled out of the black clouds and struck the dagger in Aphrodite's hand. She howled like the tormented souls in hell as for a flash of an instant she was outlined in ghastly blue light. Then she was gone. Vanished completely, except for the whimpering echo of her scream.

I felt warmth returning to my body. I could feel the rain pelting down on me, move my arms and legs again. Arthur stirred, too. He dropped to his knees before Anya.

"My lady," he said, in heartfelt gratitude, "you have saved my life."

"The witch has gone back to her own realm," Anya told him. "She is not dead. You will see her again. Be on your guard."

"I will, my lady," he said. "I will."

Turning toward me, Anya said, "Orion, escort your lord back to Cadbury castle."

With all my being I wanted to remain with her. But I bowed my head submissively. "Yes, my lady."

And in the blink of an eye I was back on my pallet in the squires' barracks. For a moment I thought it had all been a dream, but then I realized that I was dripping wet from the rainstorm that had struck Salisbury plain. Through the window near the barracks roof I could see a serene moon riding across pale, thin clouds. It had not rained here at Cadbury.

• • •

At first light I sought out Arthur. He was already risen and in the exercise yard, working out with a practice sword against a dummy target mounted on a swivel so that it pivoted when it was struck. Its two broomstick arms could swing around and strike a nasty blow to a man who was not quick enough to parry or at least duck.

I could see Latin graffiti carved into the dummy's wooden torso by long-departed Roman legionaries. Arthur was thumping and banging the poor thing as if it were all his frustrations gathered into one passive body.

He saw me approaching him and stepped away from the dummy, sweating and breathing hard. No one else was yet in the yard; morning sunlight had barely touched the upper turrets of the castle's towers.

"She's gone," Arthur said, bewildered and sorrowful.

"She is a witch, my lord," I told him. "You are well rid of her."

He shook his head. "She certainly had me in her power. If it weren't for the Lady of the Lake, I would be dead by now."

"Yes, truly."

"Why, Orion?" he asked, his voice suddenly urgent. "Why did she want to kill me?"

I didn't hesitate an instant. "To keep you from your rightful destiny, my lord. To prevent you from driving the Saxons out of Britain."

Arthur's brow furrowed. "Then was she serving my uncle? Is it he who wants to stop me?"

"I don't believe that," I answered. "The High King did not know Morganna's true nature, I'm sure. Ambrosius wanted a strategic marriage between his house and the kingdom of Bernicia, nothing more."

"I wish I could be certain of that."

He was deeply troubled, I could see. "There is a way to make certain of it," I said.

"How?"

"Obtain the High King's approval of your plan."

"How?" he asked again. I had no ready answer.

Other knights and squires were coming into the exercise yard now and began working out. Soon the yard was clanging with swords and shields under the watchful, impatient eye of Sir Bors. Young Lancelot, as usual, was a blur of zeal and frenzied action, knocking down one opponent after another. Even Gawain had a hard time against him.

Arthur and I practiced against one another for a while. I did my best to refrain from hitting him, and allowed him to whack me now and then.

Once we paused for a drink from the rain barrel, panting and sweaty, Sir Bors approached us.

"My lord," said the gruff old knight, "it's good to see you out in the sunlight once more."

Arthur nodded without enthusiasm. "Morganna is gone," he said simply. "She won't be back."

"Headed back to her northern realm, I expect," said Bors.

"I suppose so."

Gawain came up and banged Arthur on the back. "Good riddance to her!" he said, with a happy grin. "There are plenty of other women in this world."

"Not like her," said Arthur.

"That's what makes it all so wonderful," Gawain countered. "No two of them are alike!"

Bors broke into a heart laugh and Gawain guffawed loudly. Even Arthur managed a slight smile.

He's going to be all right, I thought. He's going to be his old self again.

"My lord," I dared to interject. "We have much work to do."

Arthur shook his head, as if to clear away cobwebs. "Yes," he said, "I must seek an audience with Ambrosius at once."

Yet the High King evaded Arthur's request for days on end, offering one excuse after another. Arthur began to worry that Ambrosius truly feared for his crown and had intended for Morganna to murder him. I stayed as close to Arthur as I could, fearing that Aten—or perhaps Ambrosius, after all—would send another assassin after him.

Autumn was drawing to its close. The air turned sharply colder, with a hint of snow in the gray clouds. Ambrosius ordered the last hunt of the season, and all the knights and squires rode out of the castle to run down the deer and other game that would provide meat through the coming winter.

"How can I convince him of my plan when he won't even see me?" Arthur complained as we rode several ranks behind the High King and his entourage.

"We need help, my lord," I said.

"Help? From whom?"

"Merlin."

• • •

Since his arrival at Cadbury some weeks earlier, Merlin had remained closer to Ambrosius than Arthur. Yet when Arthur called for him, Merlin invited the young knight to his tower-top aerie that very night.

Arthur brought me along with him; together we climbed the winding stone stairs that circled endlessly up the lofty round tower. At last we reached the low doorway at the top. It was open, and the cold night wind whistled through the high chambers. I could see Merlin perched on a stool at a high table, wearing a frayed gray robe, poring over some parchment whose corners were held down with various weights, including a human skull. The wind made the lamp hanging above his table swing back and forth; it tousled his long gray hair and plucked at his beard fitfully.

Arthur ducked through the doorway without knocking and walked up to his table. I stayed at the doorway, as a proper squire should.

The old man looked up from his parchment and smiled at Arthur. Through the wrinkles and the long, unkempt beard and hair I thought I saw a hard intelligence burning in his deepset obsidian eyes. Again I asked myself whether Merlin could be one of the Creators in disguise. If so, which one? Sharp-witted Hermes? Self-assured Zeus? Surely he wasn't the burly, imperious Ares.

And if he is one of the Creators, whose side is he on? Is he working for Aten, as Aphrodite was? Or against the Golden One, as Anya and I were.

Merlin listened quietly as Arthur, pacing around the tower chamber, poured out his worries about Ambrosius. I stood by the open doorway, silent and unnoticed.

"Fear not," the old wizard said. "The High King bears you no ill will, of that I am sure."

"But why won't he listen to me?" Arthur demanded impatiently. "An army of knights equipped with stirrups and spurs could smash all the barbarian camps and drive the invaders out of Britain."

Reaching up to place a calming hand on Arthur's broad shoulder, Merlin explained, "Ambrosius is a proud man. Strong and intelligent."

"But he won't accept a new idea," Arthur grumbled.

"He will," Merlin explained, as he guided Arthur to a canvas chair. "He will accept your new idea ... as soon as he becomes convinced it is his new idea."

Arthur glanced at me. We both knew that the stirrups and spurs that had led to Arthur's triumph at Amesbury had been my "inventions."

Turning back to Merlin, Arthur asked, "And how do we get Ambrosius to think it's his idea?"

Merlin pursed his lips for a moment and stared off into infinity, his eyes unfocused as if he were in a trance. Arthur gaped at him, wonder and hope written clearly on his young face.

At length, Merlin bent his gaze upon Arthur once more and smiled broadly.

"A tourney, Arthur. That is the way to fix the High King's attention."

"A tourney?"

Tugging at his knotted beard, Merlin nodded thoughtfully but said nothing for many long moments. At last he said, "Yes, a tourney will do the trick. Ambrosius likes tourneys. He takes a childish pleasure in seeing his knights bash each other."

• • •

Ambrosius was delighted with Arthur's suggestion of a contest: the knights from Amesbury pitted against the knights of his castle. In later centuries, when the so-called Middle Ages reached their zenith, knights wore complete suits of steel armor from head to toe, so heavy that they had to be hoisted up on their mounts. Even their horses were armored. Tournaments then were highly regulated affairs, a pair of knights entering the lists to thunder straight ahead at full gallop and try to unhorse each other with blunted lances.

That was all centuries in the future of Arthur's time. On that gray late November afternoon at Cadbury castle there was hardly any organization to the tourney. Ambrosius' mounted knights gathered at one end of the bare dirt field in their chain mail and helmets, their shields emblazoned with their individual emblems, armed with lances that were barely padded. There were forty-three of them, by my count. Arthur's knights, on their steeds at the opposite end of the dusty field, similarly clad and armed, were less than half that number.

Because the Cadbury castle knights so outnumbered Arthur's men, Ambrosius had graciously allowed ten squires to ride with Arthur. I was glad of that. Nosing my mount to Arthur's side, I intended to stay close by him, on the alert for treachery. It would not be difficult to "accidentally" murder Arthur once the melee started. Knights were often badly hurt in tourneys, sometimes even killed.

Lancelot was grinning broadly as he slipped his helmet over his head. I was uneasy about him: a teenager who could fight like a whirlwind, he had sprung up out of nowhere to win his spurs of knighthood at the Amesbury battle. He seemed eager for combat, perhaps too eager. Was he Aten's chosen assassin?

Gawain, for once, was serious. As we milled about, waiting for Ambrosius to start the fray, he rode up to the other side of Arthur's horse and muttered, "There's a lot more of them than there are of us."

I could not see Arthur's expression behind his steel helmet, but his voice sounded calm and even. "Yes, but we have stirrups, and they do not."

"They're all experienced men," Gawain said.

Patting the neck of his nervous, snuffling mount, Arthur said, "Today they will experience something they've never seen before."

Off to one side of the field stood the crowd of onlookers from the castle and the town outside its walls, the women gaily arrayed in their brightest dresses; the elderly knights, too old even for mock combat, dressed in their finest, as well. Ambrosius was the only one seated; his servants had carted out a fine chair for him. Of course, many of the churls and yeomen and townspeople squatted on the grass at the edges of the field to watch the festivities.

A herald stepped self-importantly to the middle of the open field and made a long, rambling announcement of what everyone knew was to come. Then trumpets blared, drums rolled, and Ambrosius lifted his right hand above his head. He held it there for what seemed an hour, while we sweated with anticipation and our steeds pawed the ground impatiently.

Ambrosius let his hand drop at last, and the two sets of knights—screaming their bloodthirsty battle cries—charged each other.

We prodded our horses into a full gallop and hurtled straight at the Cadbury knights, who were advancing at a noticeably slower pace because they did not have stirrups to keep them in their saddles. My senses went into overdrive; time seemed to stretch out into dreamy slow-motion.

I galloped slightly behind Arthur, who was crouched low over his steed's mane, his lance pointed straight and true, the red dragon on his shield bright and gleaming, the red plume on his helmet streaming in the wind.

Arthur's men could charge at full tilt, and that is exactly what we did. We smashed into the Cadbury knights with a frightful roar and clang. Men went flying off their mounts, and several of the horses themselves went down. Lances split and shivered.

Through the narrow eye slits of my helmet I saw a knight riding straight toward me, his helmeted head low over his shield, which bore the figure of a black raven. My own shield was plain and unpainted: As a squire I had no right to an emblem. I pointed my lance at his eyes, and when he unconsciously raised his shield slightly, I made the center of that black raven my true target.

I could see the padding on the point of his lance unravelling as the distance between us narrowed. I took the shock of its blow upon my shield, angling the shield enough to let the lance slide off harmlessly. Firmly mounted with my stirrups, I absorbed the impact easily enough. Not so for my opponent. My own lance struck his shield dead-on. He was jolted completely out of his saddle and went hurtling to the bare dusty ground with a painful thump.

Our compact formation drove straight through the Cadbury knights and wheeled around, ready for another charge. Half our opponents had been unhorsed; many of them were staggering off to the sidelines, dazed and bruised, some of them helped by their squires. Others lay on the dirt, too hurt to move. The crowd was roaring with bloodthirsty glee.

Two of our men were down, but Arthur seemed unscathed. Gawain had shattered his lance; roaring with fury and battle-lust he bent down from his saddle and grabbed another one from the spares stocked at the edge of the field.

Across the field, what was left of the Cadbury knights milled about in shocked confusion. Arthur raised his lance above his head and shouted, "Follow me!"

We drove at them again, but there was little fight left in our remaining opponents. It was all over in a few more moments. We knocked down almost all of them, and then Ambrosius jumped to his feet and waved both his arms. The heralds blew their trumpets and the tourney was ended.

I pulled off my helmet. From where I sat on my trembling, blowing steed, I could not tell if Ambrosius was pleased or not, exhilarated or furious.

• • •

He was more furious than exhilarated. At supper in his dining hall that evening, Ambrosius sat at the head of the long table, brooding and sulky. He barely glanced at Arthur, who was seated with his knights at the far end of the long table. The Cadbury knights were mostly a glum lot, bandaged and bruised, stiff and hurting. A few of them, though, asked Arthur and his men about the stirrups that had obviously made the difference in the afternoon's tourney.

Ambrosius did not. When he toasted the tourney's victors, as was customary, it was grudging and grumbling. He was not pleased with his nephew, not at all.

Even Merlin was unhappy with the High King. After dinner, when Arthur and I climbed up to his tower-top aerie, the old wizard shook his head cheerlessly.

"You have been too successful, Arthur," Merlin said sorrowfully. "Ambrosius sees his knights turning to you and away from him."

Arthur had seated himself before the wizard's heavy trestle table. From my post at the doorway, I could see that his usually bright and eager face was a picture of gloom.

"My uncle fears any danger to his own power more than he does the dangers of the Saxons."

And the Jutes, I added silently. And the Angles, the Danes, the Frisians, and all the other barbarians invading Britain. Aten wanted them to win, I knew. The Golden One wanted Arthur to go down in ignominious defeat and allow the barbarians to conquer this Celtic island just as they were conquering most of the old Roman empire.

Merlin fiddled with his long, ratty beard. "I was so sure that a tourney would make him see the wisdom of your plan."

With a sigh, Arthur responded, "As you said, we succeeded too well."

"He truly fears you now, Arthur. He fears that you will take his throne."

"I don't want his throne!" Arthur burst. "I want to fight the barbarians and drive them into the sea!"

Merlin got up from his chair and paced to the window. As he looked out into the dark cold night he muttered, "The curse of the Celts. I have warned you of it many times, Arthur."

"They will not unite, not even against the foe that threatens to destroy us all."

Turning back to face Arthur, Merlin shook his head wearily. "Ambrosius likes to think of himself as a Roman ruler. If only he would behave like a Roman!"

I knew what he meant. The Romans knew how to organize, how to delegate authority and responsibility, how to make a chain of command work. But despite his pretensions, Ambrosius knew nothing of such things. He was a Celtic king, jealous of his lofty position, unable to share his power.

Unless …

• • •

That midnight, as black clouds began to drop the year's first snow on Cadbury castle, I sought Anya once again.

Suddenly I found myself on that same sunny hillside, overlooking the Creators' city by the sea. The water glittered as gentle waves lapped onto the bright golden beach. The empty city seemed to shimmer in the warm sunshine: a protective dome of energy, I realized. Through its haze I could see the monuments that the Creators had collected from all the eras of human history, from the Pyramids of Egypt to the levitated temples of the New Stellar Dominion, hovering in mid-air.

"Orion."

I turned and saw Anya standing slightly above me on the grassy, flower-strewn hillside. The sun behind her seemed to create a halo about her head. She wore a gleaming metallic uniform of pure silver.

"I need your help," I said.

"I know," Anya replied. "Come with me."

She reached out her hand. As I touched her fingers there was a moment of utter darkness and immeasurable, cryogenic cold. Before I could even blink, however, we were standing on the shore of the lake where Anya had given Arthur his sword, Excalibur. It was a calm, soft moonlit night. Anya was now the Lady of the Lake once again, dressed in a long flowing robe, her hair decked with flowers, her graceful arms bare.

Ambrosius stood before us, knuckling his eyes from interrupted sleep, awkward and confused in a long wrinkled nightshirt, frayed and gray from many washings.

"Where am I?" he gasped. "Who are you?"

I realized that I was in the uniform of a Roman legionnaire; a tribune, no less, with a gleaming bronze cuirass sculpted like a beautifully muscled man's torso and a helmet crested with a crimson horsehair plume.

"I am the Lady of the Lake, protectress of your nephew, Arthur."

In the silver glow of the full Moon I could see Ambrosius' eyes widen. "My lady!" he whispered.

"You are not pleased with your nephew," Anya intoned. "Tell me why."

Ambrosius dithered for a moment, but he could not avoid Anya's piercing onyx eyes.

"The princess Morganna warned me against him," he said at last. "She said she would enthrall him and take him to her kingdom in the north, where he would no longer covet my throne."

"Arthur does not covet your throne, and you know that, no matter what lies the witch Morganna tells."

Dux Bellorum

The High King winced at the word witch.

"You must tell me the entire truth," Anya demanded. "If you do not, I cannot help you."

Ambrosius stared at her in silence for many heartbeats. Finally he confessed, "I am old. He is young. His knights revere him. My own knights are beginning to show him more respect than they do me. How can I hold my throne if he gains more glory?"

Anya did not hesitate an instant. She replied, "Send him on a mission that will bring glory to you."

Ambrosius blinked with confusion. Such an idea was incomprehensible to him.

"As High King, you can command Arthur to sally forth against the barbarian encampments. Any glory that his victories win will be your glory, for Arthur will be obeying the commands of his lord."

"My glory? How can that be if—"

"Arthur will devote each of his victories to you," Anya said. "This I promise you."

"But if he is defeated? What then?"

"If Arthur is defeated, it will be on his own head. If he is victorious, the High King will be praised for driving the invaders from Britain's shores."

Ambrosius stroked his beard, thinking hard, pondering these new ideas.

"It is what a Roman ruler would do," Anya urged. "You must think as a Roman. This is the way to glory. This is the way to win the obedience of all the kingdoms, throughout Britain. Then you will truly be the High King."

The old man's expression turned crafty. I knew what he was thinking: If Arthur is killed on his mission against the barbarian encampments, then his threat to my throne dies with him.

"Think as a Roman," Anya repeated. "That is the road to true power."

Before Ambrosius could reply, before he could even blink an eye, it all vanished and I was back in the squires' barracks at Cadbury castle, with the gentle snow sifting down through the silent, cold night.

• • •

That very morning Ambrosius held court in his audience hall. The entire castle turned out, thronging the cold, drafty hall with their colorful gowns and robes.

Ambrosius took his throne and gazed out on the crowd. All his knights were there, even those on crutches or bandaged from the tourney. Arthur and his knights had been invited to stand up close to the dais. I was behind them among the squires, off to one side by the unfinished tapestries that covered the icy stone wall.

I looked up and down the hall for Merlin, but the old wizard was nowhere in sight.

Once the crowd had settled down and the court's chief herald had gone through a long-winded introduction of the High King, complete with Latin honorifics, the hall fell totally silent. It was if everyone held their breath, anticipating some momentous announcement from the High King.

They were not disappointed.

Using the royal third-person, Ambrosius said in his deepest, most impressive voice:

"We have been pleased to observe that our nephew, Arthur, and his knights have indeed demonstrated an important new method of fighting. It is our wish that he teach our own knights, and all other knights who wish to join us, in this new method."

The crowd sighed with relief. Tension over a possible break between the High King and his nephew had crept all through the castle, I realized.

Ambrosius was not finished, however.

"Moreover, once the knights have been properly equipped and trained, it is our command that Arthur lead them out into the land to attack the barbarian invaders in their camps and drive them from the shores of Britain."

Arthur broke into a boyish grin. Gawain and Bors, standing on either side of him, looked equally happy.

"To accept this responsibility is a heavy burden," Ambrosius went on. "I know that my nephew will gladly obey this command of his High King, but to aid him in his new duties we have decided to revive a title from the old Roman days."

Anya's advice, I knew.

"Henceforth Arthur will be Dux Bellorum, our battle leader across the length and breadth of Britain."

The crowd broke into spontaneous applause. Ambrosius let them cheer for a few moments, then raised a hand to silence them.

Looking directly at Arthur, the High King asked, "Nephew, do you accept this responsibility?"

"Gladly, my lord!"

"Then carry the title of Dux Bellorum from this day forward."

Again the crowd cheered. I could see on Arthur's face the eager anticipation he was feeling. Yet I knew that as the High King's Dux Bellorum he had many months of hard fighting ahead of him. Ambrosius had placed himself in a clever position, thanks to Anya and me. With every victory Arthur wins, the High King's power and prestige will grow. And if Arthur is killed in battle, a threat to Ambrosius' future is removed.

I looked through the crowd, wondering which of them might be Arthur's assassin. Would Merlin turn against him? Lancelot? Any of the other knights?

Then I remembered that Morganna—Aphrodite—was waiting in her kingdom in the northlands, planning her revenge against Arthur. And our campaign against the barbarian encampments would lead us northward, just as surely as the sun rose each day.

Dr. Ben Bova's latest novel is Return to Mars, *sequel to his 1992 bestselling* Mars. *As this story sees print, he's traveling to England, Ireland, New Hampshire, Calgary, and Australia . . . and he might even get some writing done in between.*

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Blessings in Disguise

Sometimes you just have to accept the good with the bad.

by
Lloyd Brown III

illustrated by
Bob Klasnich

EVERY PLAYER DREADS FINDING A CURSED MAGICAL ITEM. With luck, such an item is merely annoying or invokes a minor penalty in combat. The characters can identify the curse, have a fellow party member remove it, and be on their way. Other times, the characters are not so lucky. At best, they have a few rounds in which to take futile actions before death. In rare cases, death comes before the characters can react. Unlike normal magical items, cursed items still affect a character even after the item is destroyed.

Most cursed items are the results of failed attempts to create useful items. Some are wicked "traps" left behind by enemies to confound those who find them, but a handful result from other sources.

The only time a "curse" might be welcome to players is when it isn't a curse but rather a ward meant to protect or disguise other powers that the item's creator might consider too powerful or unsuitable for followers of other faiths. These blessings in disguise appear in various forms, but they have certain traits in common.

First, they appear cursed. The item's powers might activate randomly, intermittently, or not on command. They might limit the movement or powers of the new owner. They might penalize ability scores, temporarily reduce levels, or inhibit spellcasting ability.

Secondly, these "uncursed" items offer some hope for amelioration of the problem. The owner or the owner's companions might need to perform certain actions, avoid certain deeds, solve riddles, change faith, or otherwise follow whatever agenda is required to lessen or undo the curse. Occasionally, the problem can be solved only by the passage of time.

Finally, once the problem is removed, the item reveals previously hidden or disguised powers the characters will be glad to use. Perhaps the seeming curse was meant to protect the character from assassins (real or imaginary, as perceived by the item). The power gained might be minor, but the added difficulty of achieving it should make the item a unique and valuable contribution to the campaign. Any of these items should comprise at least one adventure unto itself, above and beyond the circumstances that allowed the PCs to acquire it in the first place.

Ansuit's Gauntlets

Ansuit was a savage fighter of great skill. He supposedly took the skin to make these deep gray *gauntlets* from a mated

pair of wyverns, using only the finest and most supple part of the hides for each glove. Inside, the gloves are as smooth as lambskin, while the outsides are tough as stone.

A punch from a character wearing the *gauntlets* inflicts 1d4 points of real (not temporary) damage plus Strength bonuses.

These *gauntlets* are also known as *gauntlets of ogre strength and intelligence.* The wearer's Strength rises to 18/99 (not quite 18/00), but the character's Intelligence and Wisdom scores are each reduced to 4. If the character has 18/99 or higher Strength, the *gauntlets* have no effect.

Uniform of Kheles

This extravagant item is actually several articles of clothing: a long wrap-around shirt or tunic, separate shoulder pieces, a weapon belt, a second ornamental belt, and several small silver medals and decorations. The clothing originally belonged to a military leader now known only by his name and race. The uniform fits humans 6'2" to about 6'5" tall.

Once a character dons the whole *uniform* (which takes 3 rounds), he or she begins to see visions at random intervals. Many are harmless, but some might cause the wearer to take protective measures, mistake a friend for an enemy, or ignore a potential threat. A door might appear to open and close, a man might appear to attack someone at random with a dinner knife, or a friend might seem to slip into a pit. These hallucinations appear entirely real but never last for more than 1 round. They occur 3–5 times per day, and previous owners of the *uniform* have insisted that the hallucinations are more common during twilight than at other times of the day.

While wearing the *uniform*, however, the wearer is not fooled by other illusions. The wearer gains a +4 bonus on any attempt to disbelieve an illusion. The wearer's touch has a 5% chance per level to dispel any illusion, even one not normally dispelled by touch. Furthermore, like a *helm of telepathy*, the uniform has the ability to turn a *phantasmal killer* against the wizard who cast it.

Moil Bourava

Moil Bourava is a thick two-handed sword set with a circle of tiny blue gems around the handle, which is covered by a single piece of teak. The guards are straight and end in small steel bulbs. The haft's tapered wooden grip is simple in design: A single groove runs near the guards and another near the pommel. The pommel bears a rough similarity to a human head, although the design is awkward and the head has only one eye, rather than two.

Until recently, the sword was the principal weapon of Darwil the Dark, a staunch foe of undead, especially wights, spectres, and vampires. In his youth, Darwil was an aggressive hunter of these creatures, drowning them with a barrage of holy water and storming in with bare blades. After losing a dozen levels or so, he began to slow down and pursue other options. When it came time to draw swords, however, he was as energetic as ever and showed no mercy.

The sword acts like a *two-handed sword +2, nine lives stealer.* Every time its special power is invoked, however, the owner experiences what feels like a temporal displacement, and a gritty disembodied voice commands the owner to undergo a quest. The character must begin the quest immediately, and the sword's special ability does not function again until the quest is complete. Failure to comply with the quest results in the standard penalties described in the *Player's Handbook.*

These quests typically feature the discovery or destruction of level-draining undead. The cunning of these creatures is diabolical, however, and some quests seem superficially unrelated. One might be to prevent an ambassador from reaching a certain city until after a meeting. The sword wielder might or might not discover that an ambush awaits the ambassador, set by the spectre of his predecessor.

On the completion of the last quest, as determined by the DM, the holder experiences a grand sensory spectacle. Swirling lights, ethereal music, and a chorus of almost-heard voices make the event memorable and exciting. The sword becomes a *defender +4* with Intelligence 17. It speaks Common, can communicate with its holder by telepathy, can bestow *strength* once per day (at 12th level), and has a special purpose: to combat vampires. Vampires cannot regenerate damage caused by the weapon, healing at normal rates only.

Blackstone Amulet

Songs tell of a mysterious pendant known as the *blackstone amulet.* The *amulet* is a gold disk with bright blue and scarlet glyphs on its back. The front contains raised images of six different buildings, apparently common homes. The images actually represent a map showing the site of the temple where the item was made. The center of the disk holds a small black pearl. An illusion inside the gem shows the whole temple

in great detail, although the item would have to be magnified greatly to make the figure recognizable.

The glyphs on the back describe a little-known religious quotation. The quotation might be from a tome (but not the faith's canon), a quote attributed to a decanonized saint, or a former translation of a holy work. In any case, it should not directly reveal the religion's identity. A simple Religion proficiency check does not reveal the source of the quote.

Once the item is hung over a character's neck and some attempt is made to invoke its powers (such as reading the inscriptions on it, holding it up like a holy symbol to turn undead, or merely holding it and visualizing magical powers), a curse is activated. Since just wearing the *amulet* does not invoke the curse, a character might wear it for some time before the curse takes effect.

First, the curse prevents attempts to remove the necklace. Casting *dispel magic* or *remove curse* is ineffective. Higher level spells (such as *limited wish*) are also ineffective. A *wish* might remove the *amulet*, but it does not dispel the curse—the curse merely affects the next person to wear the *amulet* and attempt to use it.

Secondly, the *amulet* tires the wearer. The character feels that he or she can never enjoy a full night's sleep, feels drowsy all of the time, and becomes exhausted easily. The character can recover spells only after 12 hours of rest and suffers penalties as if fatigued. (The character is considered one encumbrance category worse; moderate becomes heavy, for example.) For campaigns not using encumbrance, the character's movement is reduced by one third, and all attack rolls and saving throws are made at a –1 penalty.

Lastly, the wearer seems to suffer from an inability to learn from past mistakes. Although the character's ability scores are unaffected, he or she suffers a –10% penalty to any experience points earned. The character's motivation and desire to improve are apparently subject to the same numbness that affects the body and fatigues the muscles.

The PCs must determine which religion enchanted the device. Once they have identified the faith, a priest of that religion must research a spell to undo the specific curse. The spell is 7th level, so the priest must be at least 14th level to research and cast it. Naturally, if the

priest is not a PC, the party must persuade the individual to spend the weeks of research and offer to pay for the cost of research at the very least.

The new spell immediately lifts the curse. The wearer may use the item's full powers, as long as he or she knows the command words. The quotation on the back of the *amulet* holds the command words and the descriptions, so the character can use them once the curse is lifted.

- The *amulet* grants the wearer 10% magic resistance.
- The wearer cannot be surprised.
- The wearer may use any of the following powers, once per day each: *bless, negative plane protection, tongues, free action*, and *cure critical wounds*.
- A good-aligned character may also use *command* once per day and *dispel evil* once per week.
- Finally, a priest with the granted power to Turn Undead affects an extra 1d6 creatures when turning undead, so a powerful priest might affect 3d6 + 2d4 undead when facing skeletons or zombies.

Heramais' Pipes

This set of metal *pipes* appears similar to pan-pipes and is played in a similar fashion. The instrument actually includes two parallel rows of pipes, however, and is very difficult to play. The *pipes* produce a weak, tinny sound that is hardly appealing on first hearing. Legend has it that a mortal made the *pipes* for a god, who played them once and set them aside. The haunting, unearthly music the god played remained in the *pipes*, affecting the next person to play them.

When a character first blows on the pipes, the pipe-player begins to imagine a grand symphony, an epic musical work of enormous scope and beauty. The music affects the pipe-player as a *maze* spell. Other characters see the stricken victim standing with mouth agape and eyes wide as he or she marvels at the wondrous melodies.

After the pipe-player recovers from this fugue state, the character becomes melancholy with grief over having lost the beautiful music and tries to emulate it on the *pipes*. The character soon becomes obsessed with playing the instrument, convinced that only these *pipes* can recreate the music. Whenever the character is not otherwise occupied, her or she plays the *pipes*, unaware of any possible danger from nearby monsters or the irritation of friends.

Whenever the pipe-player is not actually engaged in an encounter, the character has a 20% chance of mindlessly blowing on the *pipes* for 1d3 turns. NPCs, or PCs who are roleplayed well, certainly play the *pipes* more often. If the pipe-player is prevented from playing the *pipes*, the character becomes angry and uses force if necessary to take the *pipes* and play them. The character would never sell the *pipes*, allow them to be damaged, or give them away. If the *pipes* are taken, the character uses whatever means is necessary to retrieve them.

The pipe-player becomes keenly interested in music even when not playing the *pipes*. The character listens ardently to music or songs of any kind. When in a town, the pipe-player seeks out bards or

minstrels. The character cannot make a saving throw vs. a harpy's song; instead, the character runs toward the sound at his or her maximum movement rate.

As the character plays the *pipes*, the instrument seems capable of producing new sounds, first gaining new range, then expanding in capability, mimicking the sounds of other instruments. Over the course of eight weeks, the character gradually becomes more obsessed with the *pipes*, spending more and more time playing them.

Toward the end of the last week, the character becomes convinced that he or she is on the brink of recovering the enchanting music and stops all other activities, giving up livelihood, social obligations, and all considerations other than just enough food, water, and sleep to survive. The character may not undertake spell research, adventure, travel, or perform any activity that takes time away from piping. The pipe-player can defend him- or herself if attacked but does not put on armor or prepare spells.

The symphony has six parts the piper must recreate before achieving the dream of recreating the entire symphony. As soon as the pipe-player completes the final part, the character plays the entire theme from beginning to end in a state of rapture. Any creatures within 60 feet that hear the music stand transfixed during the 2 turns the theme is played, listening to the music (no saving throw).

Upon this success, the character breaks down and weeps, overcome with joy at the chance to play the unique instrument and create such matchless music. The character is freed of the compulsion to play the symphony at every opportunity and may resume a normal life again.

Meanwhile, the pipe-player's skill with the instrument is not lost. The character gains the Musical Instrument proficiency in the pipes and can mimic the sound of a dozen different instruments (subject to the DM's decision based on the character's culture and background) when playing them. The pipes can counter hostile spells and spell-like effects based on song (like a bard's countersong ability) at the 12th level of ability. If the pipe-player is a bard, his or her countersong ability improves by 4 levels or is raised to 12th, whichever is higher.

The character receives one final benefit from the obsession of the *pipes*. The character's Charisma score is permanently raised by 1 point. All creatures who heard the character play the symphony regard the character as a musical master without peer, despite later denials or failed musical performances. Reaction adjustments from these creatures are made at a –3 bonus.

The Armor of Torrentin

Torrentin, before he became famous as an enchanter, was known as a warrior and practical joker. The magical items he created, mostly swords and armor, were largely untouched by thieves who were afraid the items would cause more trouble than they were worth. If any rogue had taken his final item, which he modestly named the *armor of Torrentin*, the suspicion would undoubtedly have been validated.

The *armor* is a well-forged suit of *platemail* +2. Unknown to its current owner, an army lieutenant in an infantry unit, the *armor* has a permanent *unseen servant* that accompanies it at all times. Until the command words to control it are found, however, the *servant* performs random acts on objects within range (30 feet). The acts seem to indicate a desire for attention, despite the unintelligent nature of the *servant*. The longer the *servant* goes unknown, the more dangerous the acts become. At first, it might knock over a stack of coins or topple a barrel of apples in the marketplace. Later, it might unbuckle a sword belt or unplug a canteen. After a month of confusion, the *servant* might remove torches from sconces or dump material components out of nearby pouches.

Whether controlled or uncontrolled, the *servant* is only active when the *armor* is worn. If destroyed, the *servant* returns in one week. Only the complete destruction of the *armor* destroys the *servant* permanently.

The command words to the item are not easy to find. Curious characters find their first clue in the tomb that holds Torrentin's body and his spellbook. Fortunately, the durable parchment held up well against wear, although the protective enchantments have worn off or discharged.

Inside the front cover of the spellbook lies a riddling stanza that clearly indicates the armor. It leads the characters on the beginning of a hunt through the city, through inscriptions on public monuments, a quotation from a popular play, a certain page on a dusty book in the library, a canonical verse, and several other hiding places. Following one clue to the next could take a lazy week or a hectic three days.

Patient characters who sift through all of the clues are able to finally command the *unseen servant*.

Creating New Items

If you wish to create new items with their powers hidden or protected, use the following tables, generously sprinkled with your own creativity and campaign flavor. Roll once for a drawback and once for a power. If the power far outweighs the drawback, add another drawback, reroll the power, or simply

1d100	Drawback
01–05	Character is blinded
06–12	Character is deafened
13–19	Character becomes mute
20–24	Character's senses dulled to half effectiveness
25–27	Character may not advance in level
28–34	Character loses a racial trait (infravision, stealth, bonus to saves)
35–42	Character loses ability points (temporarily when used or held/carried)
43–48	Character becomes fatigued or exhausted when invoking the item's power
49–52	Character is paralyzed for 5–8 rounds when using a power and suffers saving throw penalties when carrying the item
53–54	–1 penalty to all saving throws
55–56	–2 penalty to all saving throws
57–58	–3 saving throw penalty to one attack form (such as a medusa's gaze)
59–63	Character unable to heal normally
64–66	Character resistant to magical healing (half effectiveness)
67–70	Character gains almost no nutrition from most foods and must constantly eat to avoid starvation
71–74	Item burns or shocks character when invoking a power (50% chance for either; damage 1d4 points per spell level equivalent or 2d6 points)
75–79	Item teleports away 5–30 feet when its power is used (random direction, including up and down)
80–82	Item weighs 5–10 times normal
83–85	Item is fragile and easily destroyed
86–88	Item's command words change every 2–8 weeks
89–90	Item disrupts or interferes with the use of other magical items (d4–1 are affected for 1–3 turns at a time)
91–93	Item causes a 5% chance of spell failure and causes or adds a 10% chance of failure when the user reads a scroll
94–00	Item's main power is hidden until a contingency is met

1d100	Powers
01–09	Item raises an ability score and bestows a saving throw bonus
10–12	+1 bonus to all saving throws
13–15	+2 bonus to one category of saving throws
16–18	+3 bonus to saving throws against one specific attack form (ghoul paralyzation, for example)
19–25	Item grants magic resistance (2–12%)
26–38	Item gives skill in a craft (proficiency like Stonemasonry, Blacksmithing, Carpentry)
39–48	Item grants knowledge (proficiency like Ancient Languages, Ancient History, and so on)
49–55	Item bestows weapon proficiency
56–62	Item improves learning ability (+5% or +10% to XP)
63–70	Item allows enhanced movement (*haste, jump, spider climb, levitate, fly*)
71–76	Item allows instant movement (*dimension door, teleport, word of recall*)
77–81	Item bestows group combat bonuses (bard ability, *bless, chant, prayer*)
82–88	Item bestows detection ability (i.e., *detect poison, know alignment, detect invisible*, etc.)
89–92	Item creates illusions (either *phantasmal force* or *spectral force*)
93–00	Item summons/creates creatures (from common insects or rats to *monster summoning VII*)

alter the result. After choosing or rolling powers, create a background and fill in the details on the item, including a physical description and a name.

For example, you might roll a 2 (blindness) for a drawback and a 33 (craft skill) for a power. Thinking about the various causes of blindness, you might decide that the sight of a nymph has the most potential. Perhaps the original owner or creator of the item saw a nymph and was blinded by her unearthly beauty. The smitten character strove to recreate the nymph's beauty by sculpting stone statues, trying to recreate the nymph's perfect form.

This power seems weak for the drawback of permanent blindness, so the DM allows the blindness to be removed by *remove curse, atonement*, or *limited wish*. To maintain the flavor of the item, however, the character still sculpts best only in the dark if the blindness is removed somehow. If the player actually removes the character from play for a while to work on the statuary instead of removing the blindness, you might allow the character to regain sight upon finishing the final "perfect" statue of the nymph.

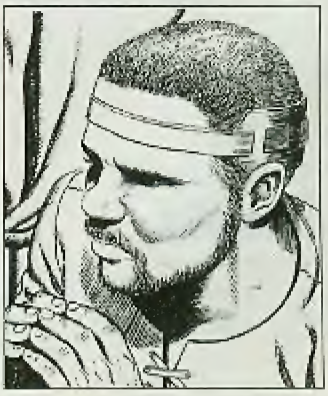
Lloyd's wife is a blessing without the disguise. She and LLoyd live in a little house in the swamp, surrounded by rats, alligators, cottonmouths, and other mythical creatures.

PC Portraits

Priests & Druids

by Terry Dykstra

"Priests have existed for thousands of years," notes Terry Dykstra, "so I had some leeway in how I drew them. Historians aren't sure how the druids looked either, so I used a little imagination there as well. I based many of these portraits on friends and family members. Actually, I don't know any of these people, but I'm sure they're someone's friend or family member."



Shakespeare's Fairy Court

Now it is the time of the night
That the graves, all gaping wide,
Every one lets forth his sprite,
In the churchway paths to glide:
And we fairies that do run
By the triple Hecate's team,
From the presence of the sun,
Following darkness like a dream,
Now are frolic . . . .

—*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, V.i.378ff

by
Carrie Bebris

illustrated by
Llyn Hunter

IN A WARM SUMMER NIGHT, THE BREEZE HEAVY with the musky perfume of a garden in bloom, who would experience more than mild surprise at the sight of tiny footprints wending between the rosebushes and the snapdragons? There are times when the air seems to hold magic, when the boundary between dream and wakefulness blurs. In that twilight state dwell the fairies of William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Oberon rules as king of the fairies, with Titania as his queen. Puck, a notorious trickster, attends Oberon as his servant and jester. The fairy court also includes Peaseblossom, Moth, Mustardseed, Cobweb, and other wee fairies.

The play depicts what happens one night when the lives of several humans collide with those of the fairies. To win a quarrel with his queen, Oberon uses a potion to make Titania become enamored of a slow-witted human laborer (whose head Puck impishly transforms into that of an ass) until she concedes. Meanwhile, the fairy king instructs Puck to also use the potion on a young man in the forest to make him return a maiden's unrequited affection. Mistaken identity causes the wrong humans to fall in love, and the fairies must set matters right before the sun rises. When the humans awaken, they believe they have only been dreaming.

Shakespeare did not invent Titania, Oberon, and Puck; he drew them from the folklore and superstitions of Elizabethan and earlier times. But, as he did with other characters inspired by history and legend, he shaped them into characters of his own, contributing to the mythology surrounding these figures and influencing the perceptions of future generations.

A Midsummer Night's Dream has entertained audiences for four centuries, but it seems a shame to limit the mischievous members of Shakespeare's fairy court to just one story. Titania, Oberon, and Puck enjoy interfering in the lives of mortals too much to merely exit stage left and never return. So here they are, ready to instigate adventures—or misadventures—in your own campaign.

Carrie A. Bebris is a freelance writer and former editor for the BIRTHRIGHT® *line. When Peter Pan asks, "Do you believe in fairies?" she always claps very hard for Tinkerbell.*

Oberon, King of Shadows

20TH-LEVEL FIGHTER/20TH-LEVEL MAGE

STRENGTH	18
DEXTERITY	14
CONSTITUTION	15
INTELLIGENCE	19
WISDOM	15
CHARISMA	17
ALIGNMENT	Chaotic good
ARMOR CLASS	1
THAC0	1
HIT POINTS	148
SPECIAL ATTACKS	Spells
SPECIAL DEFENSES	Invisibility, spells
MAGIC RESISTANCE	50%
SIZE	6'6"

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Airborne Riding (10), Ancient History (18), Ancient Languages (various 19), Charioteering (14), Gaming (16), Herbalism (17), Hunting (11), Land-based Riding (15), Spellcraft (17), Tracking (12).

Weapon Proficiencies: Longbow, Lance, Quarterstaff, Sling.

Appearance: Oberon is invisible to mortals, although he can make himself visible to them if he wishes. Among the fairies, he appears as a large, muscular man with ruddy skin and a long, wavy mane of unruly blond hair. He dresses in brightly hued garments, preferring reds and purples trimmed with fur.

If one doesn't look too closely, Oberon could pass for a human. Under minute scrutiny, however, his eyes betray him—the pupils are green and diamond-shaped, set in black irises.

"Think no more of this night's accidents,
But as the fierce vexation of a dream."

Spellcasting: Oberon's spellcasting abilities are equivalent to those of a 20th-level enchanter, but he requires no spellbook to recall spells. In addition to standard *charm* spells, he can cast an advanced form of *forget* an unlimited number of times per day. The spell, *midsummer night's dream*, causes recipients to recall the events of the previous night (sundown to sunrise) only as unfocused, dreamlike impressions.

Magical Items: *Cupid's nectar.* This nectar, distilled from a pansy that accidentally caught one of Cupid's stray arrows, must be applied to a recipient's eyes while he or she sleeps. Upon waking, the recipient falls madly and permanently in love with the first creature that passes into view—regardless of whether the object of affection is of the same race as the viewer. Only reapplication of the nectar, with a new creature seen upon waking, can alter its effects.

Background: Oberon and his queen, Titania, are said to be as old as the world itself. They rule the fairy realm jointly—Titania influencing the forces of nature, and Oberon governing those powers that break nature's rules. This diametric opposition inspires the pair to quarrel frequently. Because Oberon hates to lose, he is not above employing underhanded tricks (such as using Cupid's nectar to make Titania fall in love with an ass) to win his point. Despite their arguments, however, Oberon truly loves his queen, and when the two monarchs are in harmony, there is no happier place than the fairy court.

The King of Shadows is a just ruler, well liked by his subjects. He is a father-figure to the wee fairies, meting out praise, instruction, forgiveness, discipline, or rewards as situations warrant. He demands absolute loyalty from the fairies: Traitors are banished forever. If one of his elite knights ever betrayed him, the turncoat would be put to death like an extinguished flame—an event that, fortunately, has never come to pass.

Oberon loves to hunt, accompanied by his train of knights. An accomplished rider, his favorite mount is a pegasus named Moonbeam. It is said that the sound of wind rustling the leaves of the trees on warm summer nights is really caused by Oberon leading his invisible knights out on a midnight hunt.

Roleplaying Notes: Oberon can be seen by player characters only if he so desires. Otherwise, he is invisible to mortals.

Pride is the greatest failing of the "King of Shadows." Oberon often can be manipulative, going to great lengths to get his way. Fortunately, he has a kind heart, and usually acts in the name of some tangible or abstract good.

Titania, the Fairy Queen

20TH-LEVEL DRUID

STRENGTH	11
DEXTERITY	18
CONSTITUTION	16
INTELLIGENCE	15
WISDOM	17
CHARISMA	19
ALIGNMENT	Lawful neutral
ARMOR CLASS	2
THAC0	5
HIT POINTS	108
MOVEMENT	15, Fly 15 (B)
SPECIAL ATTACKS	Spells
SPECIAL DEFENSES	Invisibility, spells
MAGIC RESISTANCE	40%
SIZE	M (5' tall)

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Ancient History (14), Ancient Languages (various 15), Animal Handling (16), Astrology (15), Etiquette (19), Healing (15), Singing (19), Weather Sense (16).

Weapon Proficiencies: None.

Appearance: The Fairy Queen possesses such ethereal beauty that any mortal who sees her must succeed at a saving throw vs. spell (males suffer a –3 penalty) or be *charmed*. Because beauty lies in the eye of the beholder, Titania's appearance changes with each viewer to conform to cultural and personal ideals of attractiveness. To Oberon, she appears as a pale, wispy girl-woman with coal-black eyes, ivy twined in her dark, wild hair, and iridescent gossamer wings. She has the pointed ears of an elf, the poise of a cat, and the grace of a swan.

"Out of this wood do not desire to go.
Thou shalt remain here, whether thou wilt or no.
I am a spirit of no common rate.
The summer still doth tend upon my state."

Spellcasting: Titania favors spells from the Elemental and Weather spheres. Though she uses Weather spells (or her *lightning rod*) when she wants to consciously control her surroundings, she can also inadvertently cause changes in the environment (see "Background," below).

Magical Items: *Lightning Rod.* This slender silver rod, about 2 feet long and a half-inch in diameter, enables Titania to summon thunderstorms, snowstorms, ice storms, and electrical storms and unleash them on areas within 50 miles of where she stands.

To use the *rod*, Titania drives one end 6 inches into the ground and utters a short incantation (which varies according to the type of storm she desires). The *rod* begins to glow a bright blue from the tip down. When the visible section of the *rod* is fully glowing, Titania pulls it from the earth, aims it, and releases the gathered storm energy. The storm arrives at her specified location in 1d6 turns and lasts 1d12 hours (1d4 hours if the type of storm chosen is out of season).

Background: Titania's realm is the natural world (Oberon's, the supernatural), so her moods influence the environment. Her quarrels with Oberon wreak havoc on nature, causing storms, fogs, floods, crop failings, pestilence, unseasonable weather, and so on. When she and her king are in harmony, blue skies and perfect weather prevail.

The fairy queen is protective of her subjects—both her fairy "children" and her mortal followers. (Though Titania is not a deity, small bands have been known to worship her as such.) Titania's latest argument with Oberon arose over the fate of a changeling—a human child adopted by the fairies. The boy's mother was a votary of Titania; when the woman died in childbirth, Titania vowed to raise her son. Oberon wanted to train the boy as one of his knights, but out of loyalty to her handmaiden Titania would not part with him. Thousands of years old, Titania is proficient in ancient history because she witnessed it, and ancient languages because she spoke them.

Roleplaying Notes: The fairy queen is prone to emotional extremes—fierce love, profound sorrow, intense anger—and is rarely able to mask her feelings. Anyone encountering her, therefore, generally knows where he or she stands in the monarch's favor. Titania repays treatment in kind. Those who deal with her fairly may win a lifelong ally; those who behave dishonorably toward her should expect storm clouds on the horizon.

Puck, Jester of the Fairy Court

15TH-LEVEL BARD

STRENGTH	11
DEXTERITY	18
CONSTITUTION	16
INTELLIGENCE	18
WISDOM	12
CHARISMA	17
ALIGNMENT	Neutral
ARMOR CLASS	5
THAC0	13
HIT POINTS	62
SPECIAL ATTACKS	None
SPECIAL DEFENSES	Invisibility
SPECIAL WEAKNESSES	Iron weapons inflict double damage
MAGIC RESISTANCE	10%
SIZE	S (3'6" tall)

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Animal Handling (11), Brewing (18), Cobbling (18), Cooking (18), Dancing (18), Direction Sense (13), Disguise (17), Reading Lips (16), Tailor (17), Set Snares (17), Ventriloquism (16), Weather Sense (11)

Weapon Proficiencies: Dagger, Sling. Puck avoids combat, preferring indirect acts of aggression. He'll use trickery to make foes look foolish or wait until night and mislead the unwary. He is quite capable of defending himself, however, if necessary.

"I am that merry wanderer of the night.
I jest to Oberon and make him smile."

Appearance: Few mortals manage to catch a glimpse of Puck. He can turn *invisible* at will, though salt thrown on him negates this ability for 1d4 turns. Those mortals who have seen Puck describe him in many different ways. He is a master of disguise, appearing as a child, a stooped old man, an imp—whatever form will most likely have the desired effect on the viewer.

Among the fairies, Puck appears in his natural form—sort of a cross between a brownie and a goblin. He has a slight build, greenish gray skin, little hair, a nose too long for his small face, and a mischievous glint in his black eyes. His countenance can be frightening or merry, depending upon his mood.

Rogue Abilities: Puck prefers spells of the Illusion and Alteration schools, and he requires no spellbook to remember them. In addition to his bard abilities, he can also Open Locks, Move Silently, and Hide in Shadows as a 15th-level thief.

Magical Items: *Dust of shapechanging.* This dust transforms the recipient into another creature of the DM's choice for 24 hours. Puck can blow dust over the recipient's whole body for a complete transformation or sprinkle the dust onto individual body parts to effect a partial transformation (such as giving someone an ass's head, a bird's wing, or an elephant's trunk).

Background: Also known as Robin Goodfellow, Puck is the most notorious trickster of the fairy court. Commoners believe he delights in keeping mortals off-balance. Whenever a household mishap occurs—if the ale goes flat, the butter won't churn, or someone falls off a chair—peasants blame Puck for their misfortune. They also credit him with good deeds, however: If a chore mysteriously gets done or they find a broken item repaired, they thank Robin Goodfellow for his help.

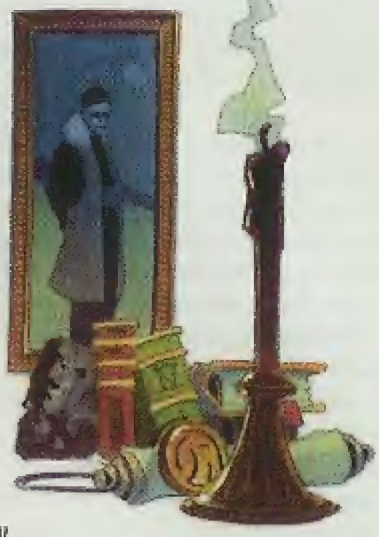
Roleplaying Notes: Puck serves Oberon loyally and would become despondent if he fell out of favor with the fairy king. His loyalty extends to Titania when the two monarchs are getting along, but he'll work against her on Oberon's behalf when they are not. Puck is known as Oberon's jester and often employs his talents for the king's diversion and performs errands for his master. While Puck's missions have a habit of going awry, Oberon considers Puck his most trusted servant.

When not serving his master, Puck grows restless. Idleness leads him to interfere with mortals for his own amusement. Though some of his pranks (such as spooking horses or leading night travelers astray) can have unfortunate consequences, Puck means no harm—unless the victim did him an ill turn or mistreated an innocent while Puck observed. Mean-spirited folk find themselves the butts of Puck's nastier pranks, while kind souls discover good deeds done on their behalf.

Adventurers might encounter Puck in disguise or find themselves the subjects of one of his tricks. Should the fairy court ever have need of mortal heroes, Oberon would send his faithful servant to test their mettle before initiating contact.

New Life for Resurrections

Returning from the dead doesn't have to be lame. Turn your next hero resurrection into an adventure.



by
Rod Meek

illustrated by
Doug Alexander

IT HAS BEEN SAID THAT THE ONLY THINGS CERTAIN IN life are death and taxes. In many fantasy campaigns, however, the local tax collector is feared far more than the Grim Reaper. Thanks to the abundance of *resurrection* spells and devices in many AD&D® game campaigns, death is no longer the final doom but rather a mere inconvenience. The likelihood of being brought back to life magically means that most PCs treat death as little more than an unusually long nap.

For those Dungeon Masters who strive for a sense of epic grandeur and wonder—or at least a little bit of second-rate scenery chewing—such an attitude on the part of the players and their PCs can be downright irritating. The heroic sacrifice of a warrior slugging it out toe-to-toe with the Arch-Fiend of Omnithrax takes on a new light once it becomes obvious that her companions are waiting in the next rank, *rod of resurrection* in hand. Some groups are so packed with life-restoring spells and gadgets that they are exposed to virtually no risk, unless they're all exterminated simultaneously. Even then, the mage's *contingency* spell will whisk his corpse away to his secret sanctum, where his lingering spirit is casually dumped into a prepared *clone* body. So much for pathos.

Some players and DMs are therefore missing an excellent opportunity for roleplaying. Since a life after death is so easily attained in the average campaign, the trick is not to remove the ability to resurrect the PCs, but to make it more exotic and challenging.

How can death be made more *deadly*? Here are some suggestions on putting new life into these tired resurrection scenarios.

Note that the term "resurrection" in this article is used as a catch-all term for the various magical methods of restoring life. Also, the effects listed below are not spells in their own right but rather variant outcomes for existing spells or items, to be used at the DM's discretion.

Example: The priest Bayam casts a *raise dead* spell on the slain mage Istanari. Istanari indeed vaults back to life, only to discover that the mage's spiritual essence is now tied to Bayam's, so he must remain within 100 yards of her or die again. This effect lasts until some other magical force intervenes to dispel or alter it.

The Vampiric Resurrection

The slain PC is brought back to life but now leads a tenuous existence dependent upon satisfying the death goddess' thirst for blood. By the next full moon, the PC must single-handedly slay some creature, perhaps even a fellow human

or demihuman. This bounty must be paid each month (or less often, depending upon the type or level of creature specified by the godly power). Most likely, this type of resurrection would be granted by evil deities or artifacts of dubious benefit. Failure to pay the ongoing price is, well, fatal.

The Temporary Resurrection

The hero is resurrected, but only for a brief time. This may be a random number of days or perhaps only until the next holy day of the deity providing the resurrection. There could be several reasons why the resurrection is not permanent: The PC might not have been a follower of the god or might have offended the god somehow; the priest wielding the spell might have transgressed some sacred creed; the priest might be holding out the "good stuff" to compel the PC to perform a quest in exchange for a more traditional resurrection. This form of resurrection offers wonderful chances for roleplaying once the PC realizes that he or she must quickly find a better solution to the dilemma or, lacking the power to affect fate, must make peace with the world.

The "Eye for an Eye" Resurrection

Some deities might not be choosy about who dies, as long as the appropriate body count is maintained. Rather than simply allowing their minions to raise an expired PC, they might demand that someone else willingly give up his or her life in exchange. Obviously, it is unlikely that anyone will volunteer for this service, so the comrades of the late hero have their work cut out for them. Their only realistic chance is to find some hapless peasant and guarantee that his family will be richly rewarded if he simply shuffles off this mortal coil in the place of their friend. Even if someone agrees to pay this ultimate price, the PCs then have to face up to the doubtful morality of their actions.

The Resurrection by Night

The hero is given a new lease on life, but only for a certain portion of each day. Depending on the nature of the deity providing the power for the spell, this might be day or night. For instance, by night Esmerelda is her usual lively self; by day, she's a stiffening corpse, or—at best—a mindless zombie.

False Resurrection

Imagine the PCs' surprise when they learn they've been short-changed, and their restored wizard has been possessed by an infernal spirit. This result could either be the deliberate choice of a treacherous priest or a mere fluke. Depending on how clever the possessing spirit is, it might pull off the charade for days on end or might simply attack the party. The remaining PCs are then faced with the problem of stopping the rampage without destroying their companion's body. In the meantime, what has become of the true spirit of the PC so ruthlessly replaced?

Resurrection by Proximity

The formerly dead priest Ichabod is on his feet again, but only so long as he remains within 100 yards of the wielder of the life-giving device. Or perhaps he must stay within the borders of a particular land or the hallowed ground of a temple. The situation becomes more interesting if the resurrected PC is now linked to a detested rival or a scorned love interest. Even if the two individuals in question are perfectly compatible, their actions now must be coordinated. It's rather uncomfortable for the subject of this spell if the caster chooses to flee a combat situation with no regard for the linked partner. This variation should be used only as a short-term solution, lest players swiftly be at each other's throats or rise in revolt against the DM.

▲ *A resurrection by proximity doesn't mean the PC becomes the priest's "familiar."*

The Reluctant Resurrection

Certain slain PCs might conclude they're better off dead and refuse to answer the summons of the priest's spell. After all, the afterlife is supposed to be a paradise for the deserving, so why toss it away to

▲ *The undead resurrection is a good option for* RAVENLOFT® *campaigns.*

return to this vale of tears? At the option of the DM (or player), the party must embark on a journey to the spirit world or Outer Planes to convince their erstwhile friend to rejoin them. Alternatively, they might have to defeat a number of guardians or overcome certain challenges to win the right for their friend to return.

The Graverobber's Resurrection

It's possible to recall the essence of the dearly departed Bodiccia, but since her body is too mangled, another must be found. If Bodiccia had the foresight to be vat-growing her replacement, all's well. Otherwise, her companions can skulk about in search of suitable corpses. If the options are few, the unlucky Bodiccia could end up in the shell of an eighty-year-old halfling; if she has more choices, she might actually possess a body superior to her original. Of course, she's stuck with what her comrades think is better, and deceased warriors might be rather unhappy to come back as scrawny pipsqueaks, no matter how attractive.

The Reborn Resurrection

Ferret has not been bodily raised; his spirit has ended up in someone else's body, one that is perhaps hundreds of miles away. This new body is not known to his companions, and they must embark on an expedition to discover his whereabouts. Ferret might be in complete control of the body, share its mastery, or could be an unwilling but helpless partner. It is just as likely that the previous resident has also just died, which means Ferret now has total ownership, or perhaps the two have swapped bodies. Once the other party members track down their comrade, they might find he has no memory of them or his former life.

The Undead Resurrection

Isis might believe the mage Berrand is not worthy of another shot at life, so the goddess grants the resurrection in a grudging fashion. Berrand comes back as an undead creature, in which case the rules for the RAVENLOFT® campaign expansion *Requiem: The Grim Harvest* could be used. "Life" as an unnatural creature of the night has its drawbacks, such as the risk of being blown to dust by the party's priest waving a holy symbol a little too casually. There are also some advantages, but such an existence would torment most good-aligned PCs. Alternatively, the PC might be fully raised but now has a certain aura that causes all undead to focus their attacks on him or her. Aware that the PC has died and been brought back, the jealous undead would resent his or her having been given a second chance.

Use of these resurrection scenarios can put wonder and fear back into the adventuring careers of the PCs. Far from being just another occupational hazard, death approaches what it should be in a campaign: a major obstacle that only the luckiest or most virtuous can overcome. An old phrase says, "Death, be not proud," but there's no reason for it to be embarrassed at how easily it's circumvented.

Rod Meeks thanks his parents for their understanding and indulgence when he first started playing the AD&D game almost twenty years ago. He'd like to think this game has made him the man he is today; we'd like to think his Mom's at fault. Also, commendations to Steve McLeod and the gang in the Tiers Campaign.

by Jeff "Zippy" Quick

MARVEL SUPER HEROES ADVENTURE GAME

10X	Strength
10C	Agility
10A	Intellect
15	Willpower
4	Edge
6(4)	Hand Size

Onslaught

Skills

Gadgetry, Repair
Computers, Electronics, Energy Control, Genetics
Intimidation, Manipulation, Meditation, Mental Control

Powers

Astral Projection 20
Body Armor +12
Detection (Mutant Detection) 20
Hyperlinguistics 20
Language Transfer
Illusion 20
Magnetic Control 20
Animation, Direction Sense, Energy Detection, Entrapment, Flight, Force Field, Manipulate Nonferrous and Nonmetallic Objects, Rapid Assembly, Scrambling, Stun Blast, Telekinesis
Psi-Screen +12
Psi-Field
Psychic Blast 20
Regeneration 6
Telepathy 20

Calling: Demolisher
Personality: Onslaught was crafty but single minded. His personality consisted of all the negative parts of Professor Xavier's and Magneto's minds.

History

No one understood when the word "Onslaught" began appearing on the walls and computers of secret facilities—a sentinel factory, a Nimrod research laboratory, even in Sebastian Shaw's hidden base. Onslaught's first appearances were more confusing than terrifying. That would change.

Onslaught first appeared to Franklin Richards as his "imaginary friend," Charlie, but his origins lay with Professor Xavier of the X-Men. When Professor X wiped Magneto's mind, a fragment of Magneto's evil psyche slipped into Xavier's mind and took hold. This presence eventually created a separate personality, an amalgamation of Charles Xavier and Magneto. Onslaught emerged as the cruel, negative sides of both their personalities, wielding the awesome powers of both men.

With Franklin's help, Onslaught set up an immense fortress in Central Park. Just as the heroes of New York attacked, Onslaught set off an electromagnetic pulse, disrupting every electronic device in New York. Though the heroes would have loved to stop Onslaught, they suddenly had a city of people to rescue. An enormous fight ensued, involving dozens of heroes who fought valiantly but futilely against Onslaught. Just at their moment of defeat, Doctor Doom, the Avengers, the Fantastic Four, and others appeared to continue the fight.

At last, the Hulk broke Onslaught's armor, and a maelstrom of psionic energy swept out from the breach. In a split-second rush, numerous heroes and villains hurled themselves into the breach to contain the psionic outburst. They would have been destroyed had not Franklin Richards' reality warping power saved them. Franklin created an alternate reality in which the heroes were reborn with no memories of their past lives.

Narrator Notes

Onslaught defeated every mutant in the book and "killed" the Avengers, the Fantastic Four, and Doctor Doom! What can you do for an encore?

The answer is, don't bring him back at all. Introduce somebody who just looks like him.

Onslaught was so scary, no hero wants to face him again. A subtle villain can get a lot of mileage out of this kind of fear. Mystique could change her form to appear as Onslaught and intimidate a lot of people before she was found out. Mesmero could induce a mental image of Onslaught, manipulating all the fear and dread such an encounter would create. Even Arcade could build a giant Onslaught-bot for one of his Murderworld contraptions.

MARVEL COMICS

Role Models

Creating Terrain

By J.D. Wiker and Jim Bishop

Photos by Craig Cudnohufsky

Just as miniatures make action easier to picture, terrain makes scenes easier to visualize. Constructing and painting terrain might seem difficult at first, but it's much easier than it looks.

There are four basic kinds of terrain: **hills, platforms, trees,** and **cover.** Each type can be simple or complex, and each can be combined with any or all of the others. The more complicated the terrain, the longer it takes to construct, and the more experience you'll need to do it well. With a little practice, the results will soon enhance every game session.

Hills

Hills are the easiest kind of terrain to build because nearly any flat surface can be used as a hill. A book or two makes a decent sheer-sided hill. Covered with a towel, it develops smooth sides. Complex hills can be created by layering pieces of wood, but it's easier to work with inch-thick pieces of styrofoam. Cut the edges at an angle to provide a decent slope, then glue the entire thing to a cardboard base. Using a slightly larger piece of cardboard keeps the edges of the styrofoam from chipping. Cover it all with green paint, but don't use spray-paint—it eats styrofoam!

Platforms

Platforms include buildings, towers, rocks, and other structures that provide elevation for a figure standing upon them. They might sound challenging, but just remember a couple of rules:

1. Platforms by definition are things a miniature can stand atop without falling off. Everything else is just decoration.

2. Forget about what's inside a structure. The inside doesn't matter; that's what the mat and markers are for!

The easiest platforms are rocks. Just grab some fair-sized stones from the lawn or the side of the road. Then lay them on the table in whatever configuration is needed.

Buildings are almost as simple. Any more-or-less rectangular piece of wood or styrofoam does the trick, as do small cardboard boxes. If it's important to know where doors and windows are, just draw those on with a pencil or a marker. Put a small building on top of a larger one, and it's a two-story building.

Towers are harder. Try sticking four sharpened pencils into the corners of a square of styrofoam, and angle them outward slightly so the "base" is larger than the square. Assuming all the pencils are about the same length, this creates a platform atop poles. If the tower is solid, however, it's best to use something more stable, like a piece of 2 × 4 building lumber.

Advanced Bases

Plain bases can look pretty dull, so make them look better with some vegetation. After finishing the paint job on a miniature, paint the entire base green. While the paint is still wet, cover that with artificial grass (about $3/package) or a little sand. Both are available at hobby shops and model train stores.

The same thing works for hills and groups of trees. Just add the grass in sections: Paint a small area, then cover the wet paint with artificial grass until it's finished. For variety, cover a few small, irregular areas with sand instead of grass.

A bit of artificial grass sprinkled over the wet paint makes your bases stand out.

Trees

Trees are simple, but making a lot of them can become expensive. Hobby stores and model railroad stores sell packages of two or three trees for about $5–10, depending on the quality. Just glue them to a piece of cardboard for stability, and you've made a small grove.

Cover

Hobby stores also sell packages of "lichen," which can be torn up into smaller sections to make bushes. Bushes are "soft" cover—in other words, cover that missile fire can penetrate. "Hard" cover includes walls, doors, furniture, and so on. Many of these can also be purchased in hobby stores, but it's easiest to just grab some household items—paint bottles, caps from aerosol cans, playing cards held up with blue stickum … anything. Small rocks (those just a little too small or uneven for miniatures to stand on) also make great cover, and they have the virtue of not needing any paint to look realistic!

Painting It

Painting all of this terrain needn't be difficult. It's just a matter of making it "good enough for now" and adding more detail later. Buildings, for example, can be painted whatever base color the building would be—brown, most likely—and the doors and windows painted as black rectangles and squares. Paint long, narrow rectangles inside the door rectangle in a lighter color to represent planks. Paint two brown rectangles side by side in the window for shutters, or paint four light blue squares in to represent panes of glass. Just remember, the most effective paint jobs aren't always the ones that take a lot of time.

JD Wiker arrived at Wizards of the Coast packed in styrofoam and only partially assembled. Jim Bishop has more unfinished terrain in his house than he has food.

As the PCs reach the halfway point, the gnolls rush out to attack.

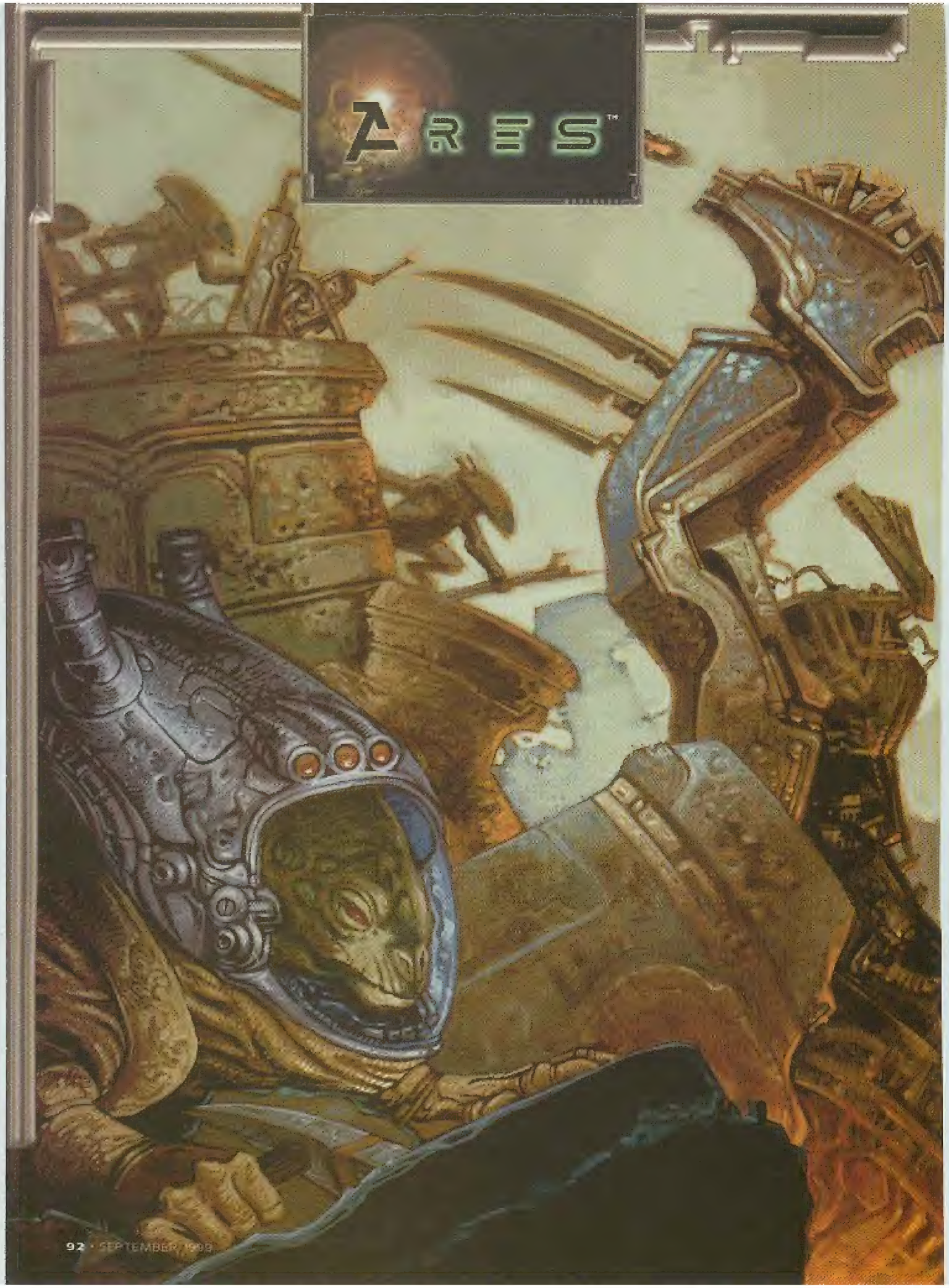
The monsters' goal is to push the PCs into the cravasse, not to fight.

Narrow Crossing

A simple scenario to make use of all that terrain is a bridge crossing—with plenty of opposition. In this instance, the adventurers are crossing a wide crevasse with rocks and brush on both sides. There's a sturdy stone bridge, but it's extremely narrow, with only enough room for one man-sized creature. Hidden on the far side is a group of gnolls (two or three for each PC) who prey on people crossing the bridge.

When the first PC is halfway across the bridge, the gnolls rush forth from hiding and attack. Their goal is not to trade blows with the PCs, since they know they'll probably lose against well-armed and armored foes. Instead, they plan to mob the first PC and push him or her over the side of the bridge into the 30'-deep crevasse. Then they'll run back to cover.

The gnolls know that the fall probably won't kill someone that sturdy looking—but the rest of the PCs should be distracted trying to help the fallen character climb back up. While the PCs do that, the gnolls rush forth again, using the same tactic against the next person to cross. They keep doing this until they are beaten or until the only PCs left are poorly armed and armored types—like wizards or thieves. Then they attack *en masse*, going back for the characters in the crevasse later.


ARES™

BLINK OF AN EYE:

Don't blink or you'll miss it. See? In that second, the t'sa did something. It might be something good, or it might be something bad, but they did something. Quick thinking and quick acting, the t'sa are always busy, always looking for something new. It's this trait that drove them to colonize space, and it continues to drive them toward new challenges in the STAR DRIVE *campaign setting for the* ALTERNITY *game.*

THE WORLD OF THE T'SA

BY STEPHEN KENSON
ILLUSTRATED BY MARK NELSON

THE T'SA ARE A REPTILIAN RACE from a world where mammals never developed to out-evolve reptiles. Instead, smaller reptiles became smarter, outstripping the larger reptiles with brains rather than brawn. The t'sa have been applying their native inventiveness and curiosity to the development of their civilization ever since.

The t'sa are perhaps the most industrious race in the known galaxy. They are certainly the fastest growing civilization among all the human-dominated Stellar Nations. The t'sa are fiercely independent and proud of their achievements. They are also the indirect cause of the two worst wars in galactic history. If anything is certain, it's that the growth of t'sa civilization holds surprises for everyone in known space.

PHYSIOLOGY

T'sa are small reptilian humanoids, standing from 1.1 to 1.4 meters tall on average and weighing 30 to 50 kilograms. They have a sleek hide of small, overlapping scales that cover whipcord muscles. Skin color ranges from dark brown through greens to red, ochre, and golden. Male t'sa tend to have brighter skin tones than females. The t'sa head is small and triangular, with a blunt snout, slitted nostrils, and small, slitted eyes. The head is topped with a tall, finned crest that reveals the t'sa's family heritage. T'sa have long, whiplike tails that are always in motion, lashing from side to side or twitching slightly even when the t'sa is standing still (a rare occasion indeed).

Although they are reptiles, t'sa are warm-blooded. They are oviparous, laying eggs to produce young. T'sa feel the urge to mate only one week out of every three to five years,

PIDGIN T'SA

assa	food
a'dwa	water
cha	mine
cho	yours
ch'nakan	guiding spirits
Ch'Nal	the creator god
ch'sa	guide of the pen-ple; a Ch'Nalist priest
co'tass	family/egg-clutch
dait'sya	dagger
det'sya	tattoo patterns
k'chal	guardian
K'san Ch'nak	the guiding spirit of the t'sa
naka	many
[illegible]	[illegible]
[illegible]	where is ...?
[illegible]	[illegible]
shech'cas ach	[illegible]
sha'lleer	speak
so'naka?	how [illegible]?
Taasa	the t'sa home world
t'ak tau	the mating time
ursh'hue	achi[illegible]
[illegible]	[illegible]
va'moosh	failure (literally "sinking")
xakksha	a kingdom or nation

a period they call *t'ak tau*. Otherwise, they do not concern themselves with the issue of procreation and find the human preoccupation with mating activities humorous. Female t'sa lay small clutches of four to ten eggs, which hatch after roughly twenty-seven days. Young t'sa mature rapidly, reaching adulthood in only three months. The mother cares for the hatchlings during this time, then leaves them to fend for themselves. Thus, t'sa do not develop strong emotional bonds with their parents. T'sa families are based around the egg-clutch or brood of siblings.

T'sa are omnivorous, eating both plant and animal material. T'sa prefer their meals raw or lightly cooked, often highly spiced. Eating small animals alive is considered a delicacy. Humans planning on eating in t'sa establishments or visiting the T'sa Cluster are advised to make the t'sa aware of their dietary needs.

HISTORY

The t'sa evolved on Taasa, a large, warm planet dominated by thousands of small lakes, swamps, and marshes rather than oceans or seas. Early life on Taasa developed much like life on prehistoric Earth, with many different types of amphibians and reptiles. Unlike Earth, however, Taasa never evolved insectoid or mammalian lifeforms. Instead, small, quick lizardlike creatures began to develop greater intelligence and hands with opposable thumbs. Eventually they became the early ancestors of the modern t'sa: intelligent, swift, and inquisitive.

PROGRESS LEVEL 0: THE STONE AGE

The early t'sa soon began to shape their environment. They employed intelligence and cunning to evade hostile predators, forming secure communities. They discovered the use of fire, a valuable tool for keeping other creatures at bay. The t'sa also developed simple weapons, particularly spears and knives, for use in hunting. Unlike other intelligent species, the t'sa rarely used their weapons against each other. Their non-confrontational nature allowed them to avoid much of the warfare that fills the history of races like humans, mechalus, and weren. From the beginning, the t'sa were able to cooperate for the overall benefit of their species.

PROGRESS LEVEL 1: THE CITY AGE

The t'sa began to build larger communities, interconnecting webs of alliances between clutches, known as *xakksha*. This led to the development of the first cities on Taasa around 20,000 years ago, considered the dawn of t'sa civilization. T'sa cities often grew quite large, surrounded by terraced farms and animal pens. Large predators remained a concern, but the t'sa learned to domesticate many animals for food and labor. The rich, moist marshlands provided waterborne plants for consumption.

These advances allowed more time for pursuits such as exploration and scientific research. T'sa curiosity drove explorers all across Taasa, leading to much cultural and genetic cross-pollination and the early rise of a homogeneous world culture. T'sa scholars and scientists discovered and explored astronomy, animal and plant husbandry, and chemistry. Metal-working lagged behind other sciences, due to the lack of large metallic deposits on Taasa and the lack of warfare to encourage technological development. Spears and daggers remained the main t'sa weapons, since swords required too much metal. The t'sa needed improved weapons only for hunting and fending off larger predators. Their naturally tough hide eliminated the need to develop armor for millennia.

The City Age also saw the beginning of modern t'sa religious and spiritual beliefs with the development of their *Ch'Nalism*, based on earlier animistic t'sa practices. The doctrine of many different types of spirits involved in the creation and guidance of the world created a tolerant and open-minded belief system for the t'sa. All t'sa are considered under the guidance of the same spirit, so religious conflict between the t'sa was minimal. The basic tenants of Ch'Nalism have changed little since this earliest point.

PROGRESS LEVEL 2: THE GROWTH AGE

As their progress reduced the hazards of their environment, the t'sa expanded rapidly—in some cases, too rapidly. The growing populace demanded new territory and new frontiers, sending t'sa explorers searching for new lands to settle. The lack of oceans limited travel on the surface to walking or riding beasts. The ground was too uneven and marshy in most areas for the development of land vehicles, and large ships weren't effective without seas. Water travel was limited to small boats, which often required portage to move from one lake or river to another.

Early on the t'sa hit upon the idea of air travel as a means of getting from place to place. T'sa inventors began experimenting with gliders based on the wing-structure of native flying reptiles and birds, as well as lighter-than-air balloons. Such vehicles were useful only for short trips and required considerable altitude. Still, the t'sa continued to look to the sky as their new frontier.

The growing population and the

demand for new territory caused some problems among the t'sa. For the first time, there was reason for competition between groups of t'sa. T'sa clutches and xakksha struggled to gain the most useful and valuable land. Explorers rushed to find the best new territories for settlement. Fortunes were made by the t'sa who founded new cities and offered opportunities for growth, while other explorers lost their lives in hostile swamps or to native predators. Skirmishes and wars broke out between competing xakksha from time to time. Still, this competition was limited in comparison to the wars of expansion and conquest fought on other worlds.

PROGRESS LEVEL 3-4: THE SCIENTIFIC AGE

As the population continued to expand, the t'sa moved across Taasa in an inexorable wave of civilization. There was no Industrial Revolution on Taasa. T'sa technology progressed at a steady pace, with each new development well-integrated into their society before the next came along. They developed sophisticated metalworking techniques using the limited resources available. The first functional t'sa airship, using lighter-than-air gasses, was built fifteen thousand years ago. The t'sa began to harness hydraulic and steam power about thirteen thousand years ago.

For thousands of years, the t'sa continued to colonize areas of Taasa and develop new technologies, exploring the world around them. They tamed or wiped out the most dangerous animals, advanced agriculture and medicine, developed sophisticated means of air-travel, and looked for new ways to expand their understanding of the universe. Competition between xakksha continued, along with the occasional war of expansion, but the t'sa settled most of their conflicts peacefully.

T'sa astronomers developed theories relating to the existence of other planets and stars before the first cities arose on Earth. By the time the pyramids were being built in Egypt, the t'sa were ready to travel to other worlds.

PROGRESS LEVEL 5: THE SPACE AGE

The t'sa achieved interplanetary travel nearly 4,500 years ago. They first put unmanned probes and satellites into orbit around Taasa, using them to study and survey their homeworld, as well as gathering information on other planets in their star system. Not long after that, they sent probes to other planets in their home system. That was followed by manned exploration of the system, sending t'sa crews to land on other planets for the first time. The t'sa quickly determined that several of the planets in their home system were capable of supporting colonies, and a new frontier was opened.

The t'sa space program was not without its hazards. One difficulty the t'sa encountered in their earliest space flights was the length of time it took to travel from one planet to another. The t'sa do not take well to extended periods of confinement, particularly not long months spent in tiny space capsules. From the beginning, the t'sa looked at ways of suspending the crew of a space vessel so they could endure the long journey. This began the development of cryogenic technology, which the t'sa continued to refine over the centuries. Many early t'sa astronauts and explorers died in accidents when their vehicles or cryogenic systems failed, but the t'sa kept trying.

For more than a thousand years, the t'sa explored and colonized planets in their own star system. The process of building new colonies and early terraforming efforts occupied them for some time. It also continued to stimulate the advancement of t'sa technology. Advancements developed for the space program were applied to everyday life: new computer, medical, and propulsion technologies, for example. The t'sa population boomed with the availability of new frontiers for them to explore. As the population grew, so did the number of t'sa clutches and individuals who sought to expand the frontiers of their race.

The planetary colonies of the t'sa and the need for communication between them led to the expansion and refinement of the t'sa version of the Grid. An extensive information network already covered all of Taasa, but now the t'sa Grid needed to expand to encompass the colony worlds as well. Limited to light-speed communications links, the t'sa grid suffered from extensive time-lags, a problem t'sa technicians continually worked to correct.

PROGRESS LEVEL 6: THE INTERSTELLAR AGE

Although t'sa scientists labored unsuccessfully to discover a means of faster-than-light travel, the t'sa did not allow their lack of a stardrive to slow their expansion to the stars. They sent probes into the depths of interstellar space and surveyed new star systems using powerful telescopes. When they discovered a suitable planet in a nearby star system, they made ready to colonize it.

Without a stardrive, the trip would take over a century. Generational starships were not an option for the fast-breeding t'sa; within only a decade, the population of such a t'sa ship would increase tenfold. The t'sa refined their sophisticated cryogenic technology, already used to suspend t'sa colonists and space-travelers for long journeys in-system. Thousands of brave t'sa colonists entered suspended animation

MEN CAREER: T'SA MARTIAL ARTIST (TOMORROW SPACE)

T'sa sha'cre'tasa, or martial artists, are useful as bodyguards or explorers. Their smaller size often causes opponents to underestimate them, allowing them to work covertly with ease. A sha'cre'tasa is never truly unarmed and can react with incredible speed. Martial artists often seem calmer and more "centered" than most t'sa, carrying themselves with a deadly grace and ease.

Core Skills (33 points):
Acrobatics–*defensive martial arts 2*, dodge; Stamina–*endurance*; Resolve–*mental resolve*.

In the Verge:
T'sa martial artists are known to wander the Verge, seeking employers able to afford them and opponents worthy of their skills. Along the way, they seek to learn as much as possible to help them refine their art. A fighter who defeats a t'sa martial artist in combat can expect to have the t'sa request to study with him or her for a time, to learn and improve.

OPEN DIPLOMAT CAREER: T'SA CH'SA

Ch'Sa are knowledgeable about the t'sa faith and tend to be good at dealing with people. The career is unique in that it is never the t'sa primary career and may be combined with another career choice. T'sa who become Ch'Sa often have the Faith perk, able to call upon reserves of inner strength in times of need.

Core Skills (23 points):
Knowledge–*theology*; Resolve–*mental resolve*; Teach; Leadership–*inspire*.

In the Verge:
Ch'Sa are found throughout the Verge. Unlike most clergy, they are nearly invisible, since they do not proselytize or display their position in t'sa society. A ship's engineer may turn out to be a Ch'Sa who offers to conduct religious rituals for t'sa on board ship. There is no center for Ch'Nalism in the Verge, but small public shrines are found on any world with a t'sa population.

and began their journey toward the stars, guided only by their ship's computer systems and crewmembers who were periodically awakened. When the t'sa discovered other habitable planets, they followed the same course, sending out sleeper ships of colonists to explore and settle the new frontier. So began the expansion of the T'sa Cluster.

Life on the colony worlds was often hard, virtually cut off from Taasa, with communications taking years between systems at light speed. But the t'sa persevered and prospered, much like their ancient ancestors who colonized distant regions of Taasa. Colonies grew rapidly; a few thousand t'sa were able to populate a planet in just a few generations. The t'sa might have continued sending out sleeper ships and colonizing worlds in this way for another millennium or more, if it weren't for their first fateful confrontation with another intelligent species: humans.

PROGRESS LEVEL 7: CONTACT

In 2296, explorers from the Orion League discovered the T'sa Cluster. Humanity was, to say the least, shocked to find an entire interstellar civilization on the expanding frontiers of human space. Except for the fraal, all the other species humans had encountered thus far were limited to their own star system, at best, but the t'sa had traveled to the stars on their own.

The t'sa were initially cautious in their dealings with humans, but they were fascinated by the humans' possession of a functional stardrive and what that implied for t'sa science and technology. Several colonial states made overtures and tried to annex the T'sa Cluster, but the t'sa firmly refused. Although they wished to join galactic society, the t'sa had no desire to become a client state of any human nation. The diplomatic conflict over the disposition of the T'sa Cluster stretched tensions between human interstellar powers to the breaking point, leading to the First Galactic War.

The t'sa remained carefully neutral during the war. They negotiated and traded with various factions, always careful to distance themselves from what they saw as a human conflict. When the dust from GW1 settled, the t'sa continued their trade relations with the new stellar nations. They had gained, among other things, stardrive technology in exchange for t'sa developments in cryogenics and biotechnology. This gave t'sa explorers and settlers a newfound freedom, allowing the species to settle three additional worlds during the war. During the Interbellum and the chaos of the Second Galactic War, the t'sa maintained their neutrality and expanded their territory, settling another fifteen worlds by the end of GW2. This increased the size of the T'sa Cluster to some twenty-three worlds.

With the end of the Second Galactic War and the founding of the Galactic Concord, the t'sa were finally accorded the recognition they desired. The Concord offered the T'sa Cluster the status of Concord Neutrality, surrounded by Concord space. The Cluster would have complete autonomy in exchange for favorable trade agreements with the Concord and cultural exchanges. The t'sa agreed, and the Cluster truly joined galactic society. Millions of t'sa chose to serve the Concord, seeking opportunities for exploration and advancement. Billions of t'sa had already emigrated from the Cluster and chosen to become citizens of other stellar nations. With plans to colonize another forty-one worlds in Concord space, the T'sa Cluster continues to expand, and the t'sa are becoming a force to be reckoned with in galactic society.

CULTURE & SOCIETY

As a race, the t'sa are hyperactive, quick-witted, curious, gregarious, and technologically oriented. They tend not to be aggressive, although they are fiercely proud of their history and their achievements. T'sa are simultaneously fascinated and repulsed by humanity; they are curious about humans and their technology, but repelled by human aggression and arrogance.

The first thing that comes to mind when a human thinks about the t'sa is that they are fast. The t'sa are bundles of nervous energy. They rarely stand still for more than a few moments. Even then, their tails usually lash from side to side and they fidget in ways humans often find annoying. When necessary, t'sa can explode into a flurry of motion quicker than the eye can follow, making them more dangerous in a fight than their reputation suggests. T'sa talk quickly, and conversations in their native language are often too fast for non-t'sa to follow. When speaking other languages, t'sa have a tendency to repeat themselves or use different synonyms of the same word to get their meaning across to listeners of other, less "quick-witted" races. For example, a t'sa merchant might call out "Come, come, good sentients people folk. Come and examine my fine wares products goods!"

T'sa are extremely curious. Some would say too curious. They are born explorers, always wanting to know what lies just beyond their reach. Mysteries fascinate them. A t'sa cannot stand not knowing what lies behind a locked door, or what some new technological artifact does. Oftentimes, t'sa curiosity becomes a problem when they begin poking around things better left alone, such as sneaking past that locked door, or pressing buttons on the technological artifact. A great many t'sa explorers end up dead because they became

overly curious and forgot to take proper precautions. Non-t'sa often have to keep a close eye on their t'sa companions to keep them from wandering off and getting into trouble.

The t'sa also have what many other races consider an unhealthy interest in other people's business. Among themselves, the t'sa believe that asking personal questions is simply a way of getting to know someone better, and they're quite open with information about themselves. They think nothing of asking complete strangers about the intimate details of their lives, and often forget that humans and other races find such questions rude.

Part of the inborn t'sa curiosity is their fascination with technology. The t'sa consider science the greatest opportunity for exploration and discovery. They are driven to unravel scientific mysteries and to discover new ones. All t'sa have at least some interest in the inner workings of different machines and devices. They have a knack for understanding how things work. T'sa make excellent engineers and technicians because of this, and many ships have a t'sa engineer on board. T'sa love to tinker and can occupy themselves for hours studying a new piece of technology. Hopefully, the t'sa remembers how to put it back together again afterward.

FAMILY LIFE

T'sa do not marry or mate for life like some other races do. Mating is conducted casually, since it does not constitute the same commitment for t'sa that it does for other races. T'sa mate with an eye toward producing progeny that will be an asset to the community and the t'sa race, making them pragmatic. T'sa are often bewildered by the importance other races attach to mating customs and rituals. To them, courting is simply a waste of valuable time.

The t'sa say "every t'sa is part of a family." From the moment they are born, the t'sa are part of a social unit: the egg-clutch. T'sa are highly social beings and enjoy having others around them. T'sa do not like to be alone unless they have somewhere to focus their attention. A t'sa who is hard at work can shut out the rest of the world for hours, but a t'sa who wants to relax always seeks out some kind of companionship. T'sa make friends easily, and they are loyal to their friends until death. Humans are often

amazed how quickly t'sa form emotional bonds with others, even members of other races. A t'sa can become friends with someone he or she has just met, and such a friendship may last for a lifetime. For their part, the t'sa do not understand the social divisions among humans and other races. The concept of human nationalism confuses the t'sa, who have had a unified culture for millennia. The t'sa are loyal to individuals and to the idea of their race as a whole, but the idea of being loyal to the abstract division of a nation is alien to them. T'sa xakksha involve complex systems of loyalties, but they are personal loyalties, given from one t'sa to another, and the t'sa recognize that they are still of one race and culture.

STATUS

Status among the t'sa is measured by achievement, both individual and family related. A t'sa who achieves great wealth or fame not only advances his or her own status, but that of the entire clutch as well. Likewise, a t'sa clutch can be brought down by the infamy of one sibling. This makes t'sa families fairly tightly knit, since they succeed or fail based on the actions of any of the siblings. T'sa are achievement-oriented "go getters" by human standards. Every t'sa seeks to achieve greatness in a chosen field, whether that be discovering new worlds, inventing new technologies, founding a new company or guild, or mastering another field. It is this desire for achievement that led the t'sa into space and continues to drive them to explore new worlds and seek out new challenges.

Somewhat naive by human standards, the t'sa desire for achievement makes them prey for con-artists offering get-rich-quick scams and similar schemes. This has led to the dual t'sa view of humans as kindred spirits who share a desire for exploration and achievement, and liars and cheats who simply stumbled into the discovery of stardrive. The t'sa have something of a love/hate relationship with humans, although their interaction with the Concord has helped to improve the t'sa opinion of humanity.

As part of their status-conscious culture, the t'sa often decorate their bodies with complex tattoos, called det'sya, that reflect their individual heritage and achievements, as well as profession and personal tastes. A t'sa with proper det'sya patterns gains a –1 step bonus to encounter checks with other t'sa, and a t'sa can learn a great deal about another just by looking at his or her tattoo patterns.

A FRIEND IN EVERY STARPORT

T'sa have a knack for making friends (and enemies) wherever they go. Well-traveled t'sa often seem to know everybody. To reflect this, a t'sa hero may wish

NEW FREE AGENT CAREER: T'SA KA'NAK AGENT

The *Ka'Nak* is a secret t'sa government organization dedicated to the preservation of t'sa independence and sovereignty. It answers directly to the chosen leader of the T'sa Cluster, and few outsiders even know of its existence. Even the Concord is unaware of the true scope of the Ka'Nak. Agents spy on the Stellar Nations to gather information vital to the security of the Cluster. There is a minority movement within the Ka'Nak to further the welfare of the t'sa people at the expense of other nations by stealing technology and committing acts of sabotage. So far, Chaluk Chisier has suppressed these elements, fearing they could damage the Cluster's relations with the Galactic Concord.

Core Skills (32 points):
Acrobatics–*defensive martial arts*; Athletics–*climb, jump, throw*; Stealth–*sneak*; Investigate; Interaction.

In the Verge:
T'sa Ka'Nak agents operate occasionally in the Verge to protect t'sa interests there. The expansion of the Verge is something the t'sa have a stake in, and they're also interested in keeping up-to-date on the activities of the other Stellar Nations, especially members of the Expansion Pentad who may have designs on t'sa space, colony worlds, or technology. Some t'sa agents operate under deep cover as members of other professions for years before being called upon to take on a particular mission.

to take the Celebrity perk. The hero is well known by many people, although not necessarily a celebrity. Any perk check resulting in a Critical Failure means that the hero has run into an old enemy rather than an old friend, while a Failure indicates a place where the hero isn't particularly welcome, due to past problems. Reputation and Powerful Ally are also common perks for t'sa heroes.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

By human standards, t'sa government is pure anarchy. For the t'sa, their complex system of loyalties and relationships makes perfect sense. T'sa society is based around a concept they call xakksha, which humans translate as "kingdom" or "nation." It is similar to the feudal system in Earth's history, and it arose during the earliest periods of t'sa civilization. In a xakksha, each t'sa is strongly loyal to the other members of his or her clutch (siblings), forming a t'sa ch'tass, or "family." Humans generally refer to a ch'tass as a "clutch," and most t'sa accept this term. Each clutch in turn owes loyalty to another clutch of higher status. Each group of siblings is loyal to each member of another group of siblings. Clutches join together to form different clans, professional associations, guilds, and companies. These join together to make up the individual xakksha which comprise modern t'sa society. This forms a complex web of duties and obligations on the part of the t'sa. Despite the fact that a xakksha is a nightmare to show on an organizational chart, it seems to function quite well for the t'sa. There are hundreds of xakksha currently spread throughout the T'sa Cluster, with more appearing all the time as the t'sa form new alliances. A t'sa can easily determine another t'sa's xakksha from appearance, scale markings, and *del'sya* tattoos.

The T'sa Cluster is a Concord Neutrality existing in Concord Prime space. Although under the protection of the Galactic Concord, the Cluster is autonomous in terms of government, a stellar nation unto itself. The t'sa have their own policies and laws and enforce them. Visitors to the Cluster are notified of this by automated Concord gridsats scattered along the border of t'sa space. They provide complete downloads of t'sa laws and customs for visitors to observe. The t'sa encourage trade and tourism. They welcome visitors to their worlds, but they do not tolerate criminal or violent behavior. The Concord maintains an embassy on Taasa to facilitate relations between the Cluster and other stellar nations.

T'sa laws are fairly simple and straightforward. They are based on a strong respect for the rights of the individual. Violations of an individual's rights, such as violence or theft, are punishable by fines and imprisonment. Fines or other forms of reparation are the most common punishment, dating back to ancient t'sa history. The guilty party must compensate the victim or surviving family members. Enforced labor or social service is also quite common. Imprisonment is considered a particularly harsh punishment by the t'sa, who do not take well to confinement. Criminals are more likely to be placed under "house arrest" and equipped with a tracking device that allows the authorities to monitor them. The t'sa do not believe in the execution of criminals, since they believe that everyone has something to contribute, even if they do so as part of a forced labor camp.

Relations between the T'sa Cluster and other stellar nations vary, but most stellar nations consider the Cluster a wild card in the political deck. Chaluk Chisier, the leader of the Cluster, is a wily politician with the best interests of his people at heart. For the time being, the Cluster is a strong ally of the Galactic Concord, which provides recognition and protection.

A considerable amount of political intrigue takes place between the t'sa and other stellar nations, despite the close ties to the Concord. Intelligence agents from the Stellar Nations work undercover to learn what technology and assistance the t'sa provide to the Concord. Agents of the t'sa Ka'Nak organization (roughly translated as "guiding protectors") keep a close watch on any Stellar Nation that might threaten the Cluster's sovereignty. Eventually, the T'sa Cluster's ongoing and rapid expansion will become an issue that will test the diplomatic skills of Chisier and the Concord.

RELIGION

The t'sa follow a polytheistic religion known as Ch'Nalism. It is based on the ancient t'sa belief that each aspect of the universe is governed by a particular guiding spirit, known as a Ch'Nakan. The greatest of the spirits is Ch'Nal, the creator of the universe. However, Ch'Nal is a lofty spirit and has little to do with the day-to-day running of its creation, leaving it to the various Ch'Nakan. There are literally thousands of Ch'Nakan in t'sa belief, spirits for

every type of being and thing in the universe. The t'sa give particular honor to K'san Ch'Nak, the guiding spirit of the t'sa race. K'san Ch'Nak is said to embody the t'sa ideals of achievement, curiosity, quickness, and friendliness: the perfect t'sa. Many t'sa joke that it is fortunate their guide is an immortal spirit; if K'san Ch'Nak were mortal, his curiosity and trusting nature would have gotten him killed many times over.

Ch'Nalism is the only major religion on Taasa and has been for nearly all of t'sa history, allowing the t'sa to avoid the religious conflicts that have plagued human history. The religion is very accommodating to new and variant belief systems, since all they require is the addition of another Ch'Nakan to the ranks. Also, because everything in the universe has a guiding spirit, the t'sa have few problems with the religious beliefs of other races, seeing them as facets of the complex pattern created by Ch'Nal. While some t'sa living outside the Cluster have chosen to adopt other religious beliefs, within the T'sa Cluster, nearly all t'sa follow Ch'Nalism. The t'sa also see no conflict in following Ch'Nalism and another religion at the same time.

Ch'Nalism has priests of a sort, those t'sa who are recognized as particularly in tune with the Ch'Nakan and K'san Ch'Nak. They are known as Ch'Sa, or "guides of the people." However, Ch'Sa are expected to have careers and lives outside of their religious duties. There are no full-time priests of Ch'Nalism among the t'sa, nor is a Ch'Sa required for the practice of the t'sa religion. Public shrines are maintained, and many worshipers gather on holy days, but most worship takes place in the home at small personal and family shrines devoted to K'san Ch'Nak and the clutch's own guardian spirits.

SPACECRAFT & WEAPONS

The t'sa have had spacefaring ships longer than any other race except the fraal. The t'sa were launching their earliest space vessels when humans were still perfecting ocean vessels. However, the progress of t'sa space technology remained slow and steady until their encounter with humans and their acquisition of the stardrive, so t'sa ships still lag behind the most state-of-the-art human vessels.

SYSTEM SHIPS

The t'sa use modern ship designs with gravity drives, but they still have hundreds of older ships with fusion plants powering ion or fusion torch engines. They are slow by modern standards, but the t'sa see no reason to scrap them while they are still functional. They are in the process of refitting older ships to use gravity drives.

Most t'sa system ships are cargo haulers that carry materials between planets in a system. The haulers can also be easily fitted to carry t'sa passengers in freezer compartments, treating the passengers themselves as cargo. This eliminates the need for extensive life-support systems and reduces the space needed for each passenger to a minimum. It also reduces the cost of a trip across-system to only fifty Concord dollars, although such a trip might take as long as a month. While the t'sa don't mind this method of travel—interplanetary trips being quite dull, after all—members of other races don't care much for the t'sa "ice cube express," as humans often call it. They are usually willing to pay the additional cost for a more comfortable, faster ship to get them where they're going. Many of the new gravity-drive ships in the T'sa Cluster are used to ferry tourists and VIPs who want to avoid travel in deep freeze.

SLEEPER SHIPS

The t'sa also apply their cryogenic technology to interstellar travel. T'sa colony ships are drivespace vessels with vast cargo holds to contain thousands, even millions of freezer units holding t'sa colonists destined for a new world. Even with drive technology, a trip to a new system can take months. The t'sa can install less powerful and less costly drive units in their colony ships by placing the colonists in suspension for the duration of the trip. The ship's computer systems and a small crew can handle its operation. For long journeys, the crew may also enter suspension during the ship's starfalls, emerging to make navigational adjustments and maintenance checks of the ship's systems.

T'SA VIEWS

The t'sa are certainly not shy with their opinions; just ask them. Although individual t'sa views may vary, here is generally what the t'sa think of the other major races of the Star*Drive galaxy:

Fraal: "All is talk, talk, talk, think, think, think. The fraal always think, but they never do—at least, not by themselves. The fraal gave humans the tech science and the learning knowledge to travel to the stars. Imagine what we could have done if they'd found us instead."

Humans: "Lucky, lucky, lucky, that's what humans are. A human slips in the mud and comes up with gold. They were lucky with dark matter, lucky with mass reactors, and lucky with the stardrive. If you spend time with humans, things will never be dull. Trouble is, some humans think their luck makes them better than everyone else."

Mechalus: "They know plenty. They understand the importance of science tech, but they're always about computers, Grid, and shadows. They need to jack out, unplug sometimes, and explore the real world."

Sesheyans: "We will never, ever, ever be like the poor sesheyans, taken advantage of by humans, treated like property slaves. They remind us to always remain free independent, standing on our own."

Weren: "Humans don't know them like we do. They think weren are just brutes who fight, war, battle all the time. But weren understand many things: philosophy, living, and dying. Try talking to them sometime. Just be careful to not get them mad."

UNARMED COMBAT

When it comes to weapons and armor, the t'sa started off with the evolutionary advantages of a tough hide, claws, and sharp teeth. Although the t'sa avoid confrontations when possible, they have also learned to defend themselves. In particular, the t'sa have developed many different styles of unarmed combat in the history of their civilization. Such combat styles have been further refined since the t'sa spread throughout

T'SA HOMEWORLDS

	Taasa	(N'Chalak)	Ka'Taasa
Primary:	Ch'Nara	Taasa	Ch'Nara
Planetary Class:	Class 1	Class 1	Class 1
Gravity:	G2 (1.03g)	G2 (.94g)	G2 (.97g)
Radiation:	R1 (7 rem/yr)	R1 (6 rem/yr)	R1 (3 rem/yr)
Atmosphere:	A3 (N, O, CO_2, Cl)	A3 (N, O, CO_2, Cl)	A3 (N, O, CO_2, Cl)
Pressure:	P3 (1.05)	P3 (1.01)	P3 (1.1)
Heat:	H2 (21° C)	H2 (20° C)	H2 (19.2° C)
Orbital Distance:	0.83 AU	0.83 AU	14 AU
Diameter:	7,890 km	3,642 km	7,677 km
Year (Earth days):	247.4 days	247.4 days	362.5 days
Day (standard hours):	28.2 hours	18.3 hours	23.7 hours
Axial Tilt:	8°	10.4°	6°
Density:	0.97	0.89	1.13
# Satellites:	2 (N'Chalak and N'Shona)	None	None

the galaxy and often prove a surprise to individuals who think the t'sa are cowards who shy away from a fight.

The various t'sa martial arts styles almost all fall under the Acrobatics specialty skill *defensive martial arts*. They rely on sweeps, blocks, and swift motions designed to take advantage of the strength of a larger and more powerful attacker and the natural speed and agility of the t'sa. The most popular style is sha'cre'ta, which includes training in Resolve as well as Acrobatics. Many t'sa learn the Acrobatics broad skill and have at least basic martial arts training.

MELEE WEAPONS

In addition to unarmed combat training, the t'sa still make use of various melee weapons based on ancient designs and updated with modern materials. The first is the *dait'sya*, a thin, double-bladed dagger designed to slip between the scales of an opponent. T'sa traditionally fight with a dait'sya in each hand. The dagger's lightweight design, combined with t'sa speed, reduces the penalty of fighting with two weapons by 1 step.

The other traditional t'sa melee weapon is the *sho'ileer*, or short spear. It is 1.5 meters long, topped with a thin, two-edged spearhead. The sho'ileer can be wielded in melee combat or thrown. Several spears are usually carried, traditionally in a quiver slung across the back.

ICE GUNS

Early t'sa explorers and colonists adapted cryogenic technology to produce this unusual weapon, which uses a widely available ammunition: water. Cryogenic coils inside the gun freeze water from the ammunition clip into sharp projectiles of super-hard ice that are fired at the target using a blast of compressed air. Ice guns are not as effective against hard armor: Double the effects of rigid armor when resisting their damage.

Ice guns are quiet and easy to use and reload, so long as a supply of water is available. Additionally, the projectiles melt away in an hour or two, leaving no evidence. This and the fact that liquids other than water can be included in the gun's ammo mix have made ice guns popular weapons with assassins throughout the Verge and the Stellar Ring. They are also still in use on t'sa colonies in the Cluster.

WHIP GUNS

Whip guns, known as *ch'rank* to the t'sa, are another military application of t'sa technology. They are named for the whipcrack noise they make when fired. Whip guns use superconductors to create powerful magnetic fields, accelerating metallic projectiles to great speed. With the use of PL 7 superconducting technology, whip guns are slim and compact weapons. They have considerable range and virtually no recoil because of the lack of chemical propellants.

BODY ARMOR

Throughout most of their history, the t'sa neglected the development of personal armor. Their own scaly hides protected them from most weapons. Early t'sa warriors wore cured hides, but Taasa was too metal-poor for the production of metallic armor, which would have slowed the swift t'sa fighting style. It wasn't until the development of pro-

T'SA WEAPONS TABLE

Weapon	Skill	Acc.	Md	Range	Type	Damage (O/G/A)	Actions	Clip	Hide	Cost
Dait'sya	Melee–*blade*	0	—	Personal	LI/0	d4+1w/d4+2w/d4+3w	4	—	+2	250
Sho'ileer	Melee–*blade*	0	—	Personal*	LI/0	d4w/d4+2w/d4m	3	—	—	15
Ice pistol	Ranged–*modern*	0	F/B	6/12/40	HI/0	d4+1w/d6+1w/d4m	4	15	+2	500
Whip pistol	Ranged–*modern*	0	F/B/A	20/40/200	HI/0	d4+2w/d6+2w/d4+1m	4	12	+2	850
Whip rifle	Ranged–*modern*	0	F/B/A	80/400/800	HI/0	d6+1w/d6+2w/d6+1m	4	20	—	2000

jectile weapons capable of easily penetrating their scales that t'sa gave thought to more advanced armor. *Ptokh k'se* is a weave made of alloy wire and heavy ballistic cloth, worn to protect the torso and limbs. It protects well against most impact weapons (with an armor value of d4–1/d4–2/d6–3 for LI/HI/En). In general, the t'sa do not like wearing heavier armor, as it interferes with their movements and only slows them down. "The best defense, protection, armor" the t'sa say, "is to be anywhere, elsewhere when the attack gets where you were."

HOMEWORLDS

Taasa orbits the star Ch'Nara, a G-class main sequence star. Taasa is larger and warmer than Earth, with a thick, damp atmosphere that humans find acrid due to traces of chlorine. Despite Taasa's larger size, gravity is near Earth-normal because of the smaller amount of metals present in the planet's crust. Seasonal variations are limited due to the planet's small axial tilt. The t'sa have long since domesticated the many different animal species on their homeworld. The more dangerous predatory species have been wiped out. The t'sa still use large bipedal lizards known as zar'each as riding animals, since the surface of their world is often swampy and difficult for land vehicles. Most traveling is done via aircars and slow-moving airships.

Taasa's larger moon, N'Chalak, was terraformed by the t'sa who settled it millennia ago. It has gone from being a dry world with a thin atmosphere to a lush, miniature version of Taasa, although with more carefully engineered waterways. The greenery and settlements of N'Chalak are visible from the surface of Taasa on clear nights. The planet's other moon, N'Shona, is a lifeless rock the t'sa mine for useful minerals and metals.

The system's other inhabited world was originally known as Za'lor. It was renamed Ka'Taasa ("New Taasa") when it was settled more than a thousand years ago. Ka'Taasa is smaller and cooler than Taasa, but its dense atmosphere helps to trap in heat and provide a comfortable environment. The rocky terrain is covered by a variety of hearty plantlife, and numerous crater lakes and deep tarns cover the lowlands of the planet. The middle elevations are home to t'sa cities that teem with activity.

THE FUTURE

Things change quickly for the t'sa, moving ever toward the future. Trends come and go on t'sa worlds in the blink of an eye, but always their fascination with the unknown, and with the advancement of technology, remains. With the power of the stardrive in their hands, the t'sa have opened a bold new chapter in the history of their race, expanding to new worlds and new frontiers at an ever-increasing rate.

It may be that the t'sa will navigate the treacherous waters of interstellar politics and take their place as a true power among the human-dominated stellar nations, or the t'sa may become the spark that ignites interstellar war for a third, and perhaps final, time. Only time will decide the fate of their civilization, but one thing is certain: So long as the t'sa are involved, it won't be boring.

Steve Kenson's fascination with lizards comes from his boyhood love of dinosaurs. His appreciation for the t'sa comes from seeing them in action. (And they really are that fast!)

design a DEITY contest

The Rules

Ian Malcomson's "Hearth and Sword" article in this issue presents a pantheon of deities and their faiths for the Dark Ages campaign. Using a format similar to the one presented in this article, design a new deity suitable for any AD&D® campaign!

Your entry should include the following details:

- **The deity's alignment, portfolio, and symbol**
- **The preferred alignment(s) of the deity's worshipers**
- **A description of the deity and his or her sphere of influence**
- **Statistics and special abilities for the deity's avatar**
- **information on the deity's clergy (dogma, day-to-day activities, holy days and ceremonies, priestly vestments, and adventuring garb)**
- **information on the deity's specialty priests (ability requirements, prime requisites, alignment, allowable weapons, armor, major and minor spell spheres, allowable magical items, required proficiencies, bonus proficiencies, and special powers).**

Each entry is limited to *1,500 words*. Entries will be judged on originality, design, and AD&D® game compatability. All entries must be received by *November 1, 1999*.

The Prize

One winning entry will be selected. *The winner will receive a $100 prize package* of new TSR products!

Dragon® MAGAZINE

Design a Deity Contest Rules

1. Entry: To enter, send your completed entry form including your name, address, phone number, the contest to which your submission applies, and your new deity ("Entry") to TSR, Inc. ("TSR") Dragon Magazine "Design a Deity" Contest, P.O. Box 707, Renton, WA 98057-0707. No purchase required. You may submit as many Entries as you wish, but only one Entry per submission. There is no advantage to submitting the same entry more than once. Entries should not exceed 1,500 words. If you are under 18, you must have your parent's permission to enter. Entries must be received before midnight (Pacific Time), November 1, 1999. Winners will be selected by a team of TSR judges based on the Entry's design, originality, and appropriateness. All decisions are final. The probability of winning is based exclusively on the quality of the Entries received.

2. Originality of Entry: Entries must be in English. Entrant warrants that the Entry above is the original and exclusive work of Entrant, and that Entrant has not assigned, transferred, licensed, or sold the right to use the Entry to any other party. Entrant agrees to indemnify TSR against good faith claims of copyright infringement based on TSR's use of the Entry, but such indemnification shall not apply if it can be shown that Entrant had no access to the allegedly infringed work.

3. Use and Ownership of Entry Info: In consideration for TSR's review of Entrant's application and, if applicable, prizes awarded hereunder, Entrant transfers all rights, including all copyright ownership rights in entry to TSR and acknowledges that the Entry is hereby the sole property of TSR. It is further understood that Entrant hereby transfers any and all interest or rights that she/he acquires in Entry, including but not limited to trademark rights and copyrights and protection under 17 U.S.C. § 106 to TSR. TSR shall have no obligation for consideration other than as defined herein.

4. Prizes: The winning Entrant of the "Design a Deity" Contest shall receive a $100 prize package consisting of new TSR game products.

5. Eligibility: Void where prohibited by law. In order to receive any prize, Entrant agrees to sign TSR's affidavit of eligibility/release of liability/prize acceptance ("Affidavit") within 5 days of receipt of notification or forfeit prize. If the winner is a minor, then the guardian must co-sign the Affidavit. By acceptance of prize, Entrant agrees to the use of their name and/or likeness for purposes of advertising, trade, or promotion without further compensation, unless prohibited by law. TSR assumes no responsibility for, late, ineligible, incomplete, or misdirected Entries. Non-compliance with the time parameters contained herein or return of any prize/prize notification as undeliverable will result in disqualification and an alternate winner will be selected. Employees of TSR, Wizards of the Coast, Inc., and their respective affiliates and distributors are not eligible.

6. Restrictions: Void where prohibited or restricted by law. All prize winners shall be notified by phone or letter. No substitutions of prizes are allowed, except at the option of TSR, should the featured prize(s) become unavailable. All federal, state, provincial and local regulations apply. The winner is solely responsible for all applicable federal, state, provincial, and local taxes. For a list of winners, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Dragon Magazine "Design a Deity" Contest Winners, TSR, Inc., P.O. Box 707, Renton WA 98057. Requests for winners lists must be received by November 22, 1999. Allow 4 weeks for delivery of winners list.

Design a Deity Contest

Name_____

Address_____

City/State/ZIP_____

Phone_____ Email_____

Signature of Parent/Guardian_____

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Convention Calendar

September

ShoreCon '99

September 9–12 NJ
Hilton Hotel, Cherry Hill, NJ.
Website: gameconvention.com/shorecon

QCA-CON

September 10–12 IL
Mark of the Quad Cities, Moline, IL.
Contact: The Dragon's Sanctum, 3213 23rd Ave., Moline, IL 61265.

Capitol Con XV

September 18–19 IL
Prairie Capitol Convention Center, Springfield, IL.
Contact: Capitol Con, 942 South First Street, Springfield, IL 62704.

CogCon 7

September 26–28 NM
University Center-East, Rolla, MO.
Contact: CogCon, P.O. Box 1939, Rolla, MO 65402.
Website: www.rollanet.org/~cogcon
Email: cogcon@rollanet.org

October

Archon 23

October 1–3 IL
Gateway Convention Center, Collinsville, IL.
Contact: Archon23, P.O. Box 8387, St. Louis, MO 63132-8387.
Website: www.stlf.org/archon/23/
Email: archon@stlf.org

First Contact 6

October 8–10 WI
Best Western Midway, Milwaukee, WI.
Website: members.aol.com/arimmr/page/index.htm
Email: knightp@execpc.com

Knight Games

October 22–24 NY
Berkeley-Carroll School, Brooklyn, NY.
Contact: Knight Games, P.O. Box 3041, Brooklyn, NY 11201-3041.
Email: knightgames@aol.com

Con*Stellation XVIII: Lupus

October 29–31 AL
Airport Sheraton, Huntsville, AL.
Email: constell@traveller.com

November

Carnage on the Mountain

November 5–7 VT
Ascutney Mountain Resort, Ascutney, VT.
Contact: Carnage on the Mountain, 64 County Road-Hartland, Windsor, VT 05089.
Website: members.aol.com/carnagecon/index.htm
Email: carnagecon@aol.com

Pentacon 15

November 13–15 IN
Grand Wayne Convention Center, Fort Wayne, IN.
Contact: Pentacon, P.O. Box 10427, Fort Wayne, IN 46856.
Website: www2.fwi.com/~dht/pentacon
Email: dht@fwi.com

Convention Calendar Policies

This column is a service to our readers worldwide. Anyone may place a free listing for a game convention here, but the following guidelines must be observed.

To ensure that all convention listings contain accurate and timely information, all material should be typed double-spaced or printed legibly on standard manuscript paper. The contents of each listing must be short and succinct.

The information given in the listing must include the following, in this order:

1. Convention title and dates held
2. Site and location
3. Address(es) where additional information and confirmation can be obtained.

Convention flyers, newsletters, and other mass-mailed announcements will not be considered for use in this column; we prefer to see a cover letter with the announcement as well. No call-in listings are accepted.

Warning: We are not responsible for incorrect information sent to us by convention staff members. Please check your convention listing carefully! Accurate information is your responsibility.

Copy deadlines are the first Monday of each month four months prior to the on sale date of an issue. Thus, the copy deadline for the December issue is the first Monday of September. Announcements for all conventions must be mailed to: "Conventions," *DRAGON® Magazine*, 1801 Lind Avenue S.W., Renton, WA, 98055, U.S.A.

If a convention listing must be changed because the convention has been cancelled, the dates have changed, or incorrect information has been printed, please contact us immediately. Most questions or changes should be directed to the magazine editors at (425) 254-2262 (U.S.A.).

Important: *DRAGON Magazine* does not publish phone numbers for conventions. Be certain that any address you send us is complete and correct.

To ensure that your convention listing makes it into our files, enclose a self-addressed stamped postcard with your first convention notice; we will return the card to show that it was received. You also might send a second notice one week after mailing the first. Mail your listing as early as possible, and always keep us informed of any changes. Please do not send convention notices by fax, as this method has not proven reliable.

- ❖ Australian convention
- ❋ Canadian convention
- ✪ European convention
- Online convention

MIND BLAST Solution: ORC and ROC

"It's not that we don't respect your skills. We just can't follow anyone who looks so much like Yanni."

Dragon Mirth™

By Peter Degado

MIND BLAST

Take the name of a very common monster in the *MONSTROUS MANUAL*™ tome. Switch the first two letters and get a much bigger monster from the same tome. What are the two monsters?

You can find the solution to this *MIND BLAST* on page 92

By Aaron Williams

"Cool it, Pop. It's just my new navel piercing."

The Unspeakable Oaf by John Kovalic

MIND FLAYERS

no. 4

by Mike Selinker

You're hunting Tiamat, the dragon lady of the underworld. Before you are 64 doors, labeled 1 through 64. Tiamat waits behind one of the doors, and instantaneous and irrevocable death lies beyond the other 63. You know that each of Tiamat's five chromatic dragon heads hates something different:

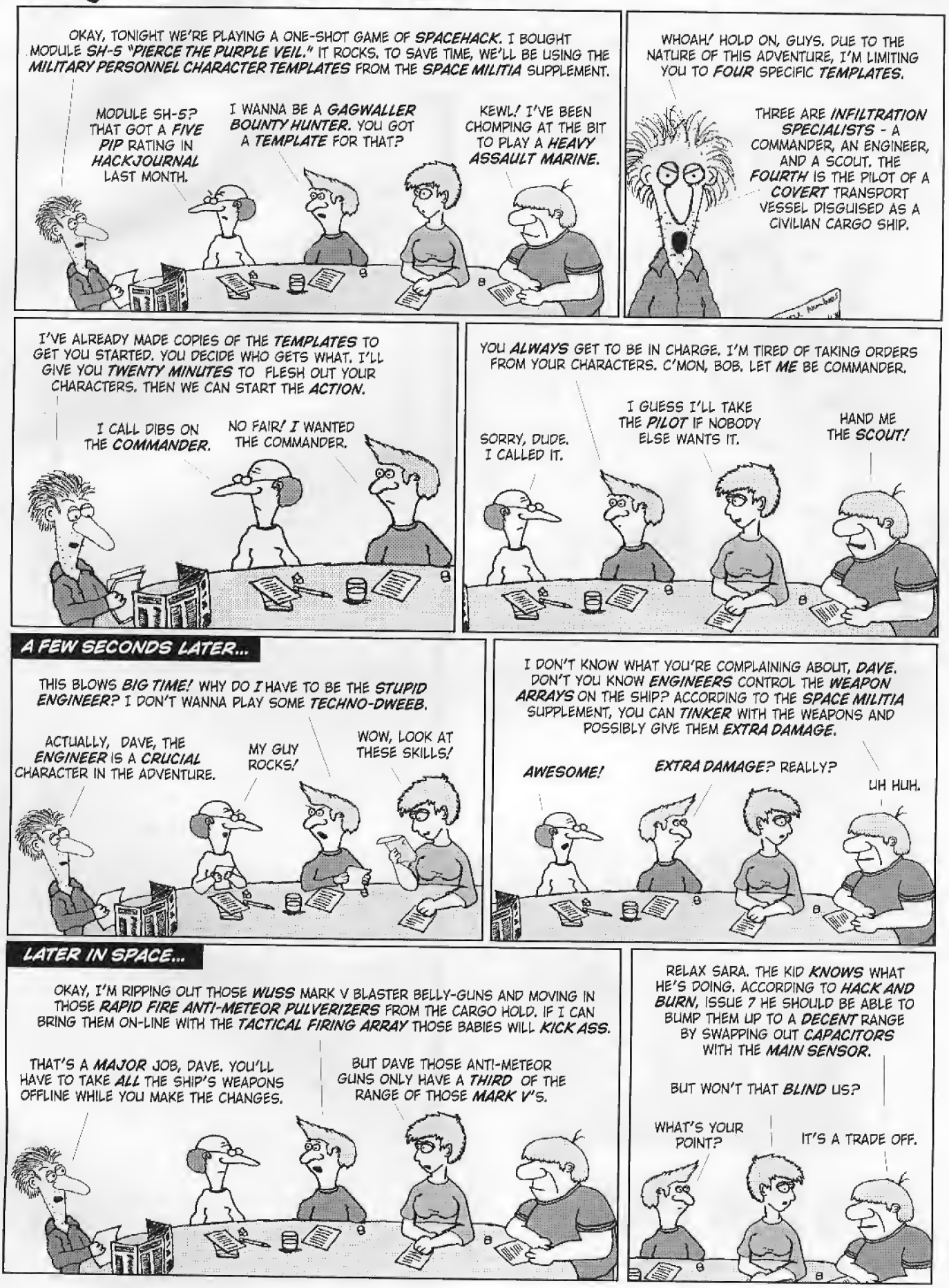
1. The red dragon head hates odd numbers if the green dragon head hates the number 57; if not, the red dragon head hates even numbers.
2. The black dragon head hates numbers containing two different digits if the blue dragon head hates the number 8; if not, the black dragon head hates numbers containing two of the same digit.
3. The green dragon head hates prime numbers if the white dragon head hates the number 45; if not, the green dragon head only likes prime numbers.
4. The white dragon head hates numbers divisible by 5 if the black dragon head hates the number 24; if not, the white dragon head hates numbers evenly divisible by 3.
5. The blue dragon head hates perfect squares if the red dragon head hates the number 18; if not, the blue dragon head hates perfect cubes.

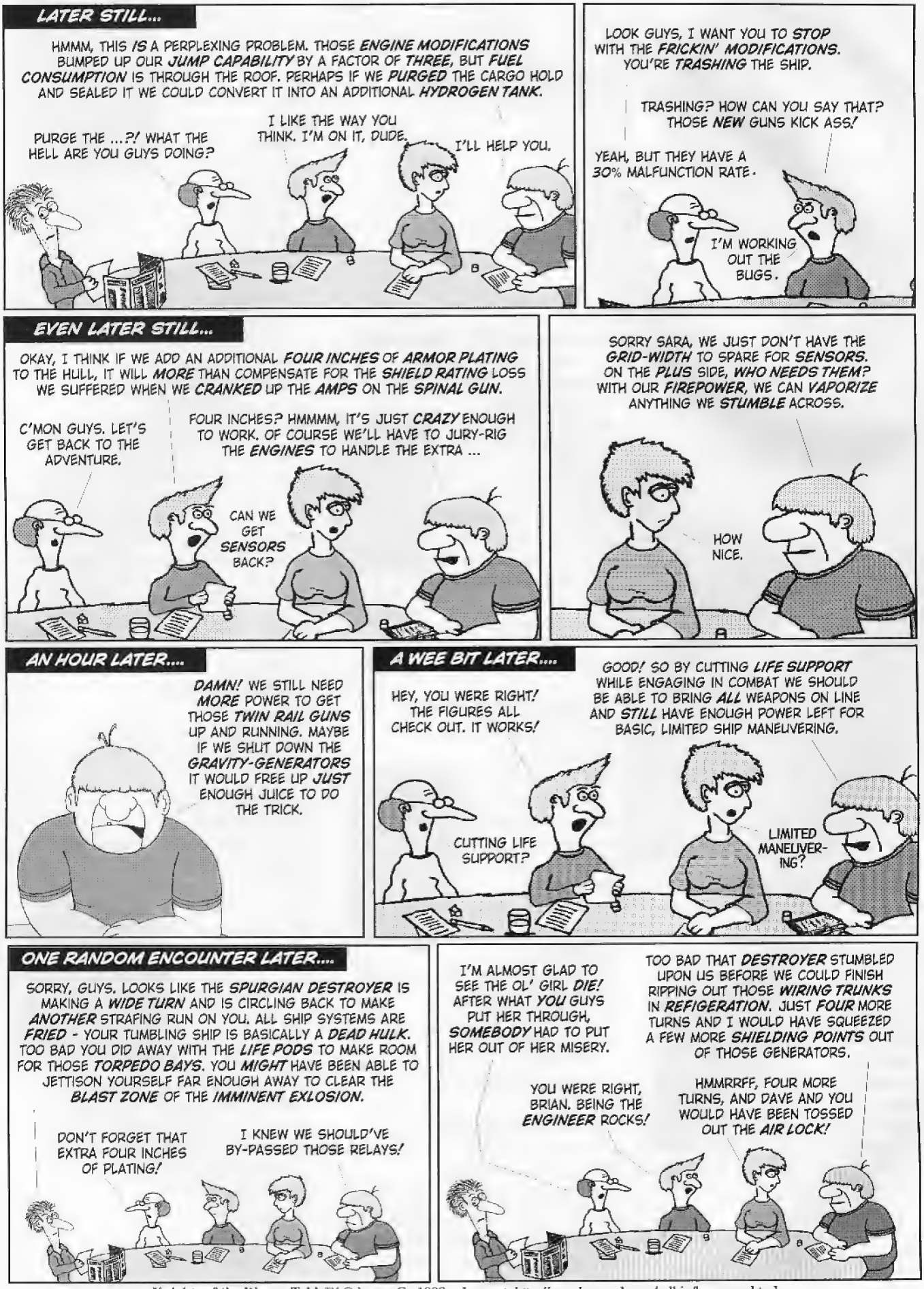
Can you figure out which door the Queen of the Dragons waits behind?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
28	29	30	31	32	33	34	9
27	48	49	50	51	52	35	10
26	47	60	61	62	53	36	11
25	46	59	64	63	54	37	12
24	45	58	57	56	55	38	13
23	44	43	42	41	40	39	14
22	21	20	19	18	17	16	15

Knights of the Dinner Table

BY JOLLY R. BLACKBURN
STORY SUBMITTED BY SAM HALDANE





Knights of the Dinner Table™ © kenzerCo 1999 • Internet: http://members.aol.com/relkin/kenzerco.html
Send story ideas to jollyrb@aol.com or KODT, 1003 Monroe Pike, Marion, IN 46953

Previews

SEPTEMBER

Council of Wyrms

An AD&D® Accessory
By Bill Slavicsek

This revised and expanded edition of one of the AD&D game's hottest selling products, *Council of Wyrms* takes the AD&D game in an entirely new direction. It includes rules for playing dragons; new character types like kindred, half-dragons, and dragon slayers; campaign background material; and a series of adventures designed to challenge even the greatest of dragons!

$26.95/$39.95 CAN
TSR 11383
ISBN 0-7869-1383-5

The Wyrmskull Throne

A FORGOTTEN REALMS® Adventure
By Steven E. Schend and Thomas M. Reid

This exciting adventure revolves around the ancient artifact, the Wyrmskull Throne. This epic employs the underwater adventuring rules found in *The Sea of Fallen Stars*. For character levels 4–7.

$12.95/$18.95 CAN
TSR 11405
ISBN 0-7869-1405-X

The Siege of Mt. Nevermind

The Chaos War Series
A DRAGONLANCE® Novel
By Fergus Ryan

When the Dark Knights lay siege to Mt. Nevermind, they do not reckon with an assortment of well-intentioned heroes, a brilliant (well, not *that* brilliant) gnome inventor, and the indomitable gnome spirit.

$5.99/$7.95 CAN
TSR 21381
ISBN 0-7869-1381-9

The Spine of the World

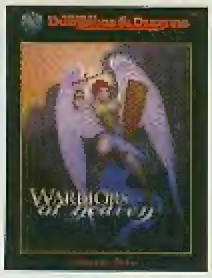
A FORGOTTEN REALMS Novel
By R.A. Salvatore

New York Times best-selling author R.A. Salvatore continues the tale of the fall of the once mighty barbarian Wulfgar. Featuring the popular journal entries of dark elf Drizzt Do'Urden, *The Spine of the World* is an epic story of adventure and redemption.

$23.99/$31.95 CAN
TSR 21418
ISBN 0-7869-1418-1

Warriors of Heaven

An AD&D Accessory
By Christopher Perkins



Nothing makes a demon cringe more than the flicker of a deva's sword, the glare of an archon, or the wrath of a guardinal. Players can now create powerful beings devoted to the destruction of evil. DMs can learn the true secrets of the Upper Planes and create challenging adventures for high-powered heroes. This 96-page book details the politics of the celestials, describes key sites in the Upper Planes, and provides countless new adventure hooks suitable for any AD&D campaign.

$18.95/$27.85 CAN
TSR 11361
ISBN 0-7869-1361-4

Incident at Exile

By William W. Connors
An ALTERNITY® Fast-Play Accessory

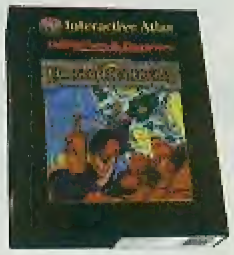
Looking to take family and friends into the future of roleplaying? This introduction shows Gamemasters the basics of refereeing the ALTERNITY game. Players can explore the system known as Exile to uncover the truth about what's happening at this deep space mining outpost—and enter the brave new world of the premiere science fiction game.

$4.95/$6.95 CAN
TSR 11514
ISBN 0-7869-1514-5

OCTOBER

FORGOTTEN REALMS Interactive Atlas

An AD&D Electronic Media Utility
Programming by ProFantasy Ltd.



This CD-ROM features a complete interactive atlas of the entire planet of Abeir-Toril! All overland, city, and dungeon maps of the Realms, including maps never before published, are available to view and print. All maps are fully compatible with and editable in the *AD&D Core Rules CD-ROM 2.0* and *Campaign Cartographer 2*.

Price TBD
TSR 11451
ISBN 0-7869-1451-3

Priest's Spell Compendium, Volume 2

An AD&D Accessory
Edited by Jon Pickens

The monumental task of collecting every official priest spell for the AD&D game continues with the second volume of the *Priest's Spell Compendium*. All spells have been updated so that players and DMs can use them in any AD&D game. This is the official reference book and definitive source for priest spells.

$24.95/$36.95 CAN
TSR 11421
ISBN 0-7869-1421-1

Carnival

A RAVENLOFT® Accessory
By John Mangrum and Steve Miller

The mysterious Carnival rolls into town, where it astounds, entertains, and occasionally repulses before disappearing again. The Carnival can appear in any AD&D campaign, and it includes the freakish inhabitants of the traveling show, adventure hooks, and rules for turning PCs into terrifying freaks should they linger too long among the tents and wagons.

$13.95/$20.95 CAN
TSR 11382
ISBN 0-7869-1382-7

ALTERNITY Adventure Game

By Bill Slavicssek, William W. Connors, and Sean Reynolds

Open an entire galaxy of gaming with the ALTERNITY science fiction game. This set welcomes new players to an exciting science fiction universe where they control the action! Each game comes complete with everything needed to play, including an adventure book full of exciting scenarios, pregenerated heroes, and dice to keep the action moving.

Use this boxed set as an entry point into the whole family of ALTERNITY products, or continue with the ALTERNITY Fast-Play adventure, *Incident at Exile*.

$9.99/$14.99 CAN
TSR 11510
ISBN 0-7869-1510-2

Murder in Tarsis

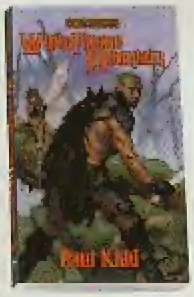
A DRAGONLANCE Novel
By John Maddox Roberts

Who killed Ambassador Bloodarrow? Time is running out for an unlikely trio of detectives. The heroes know that failing to solve the mystery means death. This tangled plot unfolds in Tarsis, the once beautiful seaport city now landlocked by the devastating Cataclysm.

$5.99/$7.95 CAN
TSR 21587
ISBN 0-7869-1587-0

White Plume Mountain

A GREYHAWK® Novel
By Paul Kidd



A hero, a pixie, and a sentient hellhound pelt with an obsessive case of pyromania battle the agents of the evil Iuz.

$5.99/$7.95 CAN
TSR21424
ISBN 0-7869-1424-6

Under Fallen Stars

The Threat From the Sea, Book II
A FORGOTTEN REALMS Novel
By Mel Odom

As the undersea forces threatening Faerûn gather strength, the heroes of *Rising Tide* prepare their counterattack.

$5.99/$7.95 CAN
TSR 21378
ISBN 0-7869-1378-9

Diablo II Adventure Game

A D&D Introductory Game
By Jeff Grubb, Bill Slavicsek, and Thomas M. Reid

The DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® Diablo II Adventure Game is the perfect bridge

Coming Attractions

Cover by Brom

Harrowed Heroes

by Ed Bonny

If that which doesn't kill you makes you stronger, imagine what the Demiplane of Dread does to its survivors. *Skills & Powers* for dark heroes from any campaign.

Dungeon Mastery: Heroic Horror

by Lester Smith

Too much of any good thing is still too much, so mix your horror with a healthy dose of heroism and a dash of humor.

Legacy of the Dragon

by Sean Reynolds

From folktales to the stars, vampires infest the darkest science fiction campaigns. New rules for vampires in your DARK•MATTER™ or STAR*DRIVE® campaign.

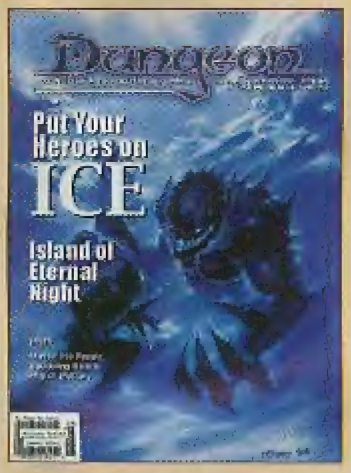
Shademehr and the Old Wives' Tale

by Margaret Weis & Don Perrin

Alise and Shademehr must determine the truth about a legendary creature before they become its next victim. New fiction based on the fantasy world of artist Larry Elmore.

$4.95 U.S./$6.50 CAN
TSR Product No. 082264

Coming Attractions



Cover by Dimitri Patelis

Mertylmane's Road

by Jason Poole & Craig Zipse

Escort a trade caravan across the icy wastes of Northern Kaloria. An AD&D® adventure for levels 5–7.

The House on the Edge of Midnight

by Raymond E. Dyer

Trapped on an island of perpetual night, your only hope is to end a lingering family curse. An AD&D RAVENLOFT® adventure for levels 4–6.

Earth Tones

by Craig Shackleton

The citizens of Blue Rock shudder as vile creatures erupt from the earth. An AD&D adventure for levels 7–9.

A Day at the Market

by Kevin Carter

Wondrous magic spills into the streets of Riverspire. An AD&D Side Trek adventure for levels 2–4.

Crusader

by Peter Lloyd-Lee

A renowned paladin needs your help to retrieve his holy sword. An AD&D adventure for levels 3–6.

$4.95 U.S./$6.50 CAN.
TSR Product No. 82076

between computer and paper-based RPGs. Using the award-winning D&D® rules and the best-selling *Diablo II* setting, this boxed set contains everything needed to start roleplaying. It features a rulebook, a book of quests, monsters from the world of *Diablo II*, five ready-to-play heroes from the computer game, dice, and quest tiles so you can build each adventure as you play.

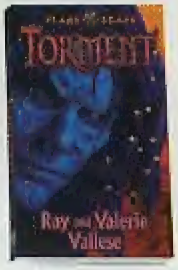
$19.99/$29.99 CAN
TSR 11548
ISBN 0-7869-1548-X

NOVEMBER

Torment

A PLANESCAPE® Novel
By Ray and Valerie Vallese

An action-packed novelization of the computer game from Interplay. A hero stricken with amnesia wanders through the planes in search of his identity, battling strange demons and treacherous companions.

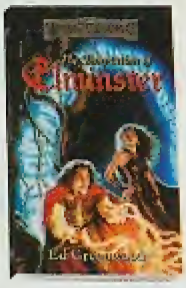


The PLANESCAPE setting is an innovative campaign world played by many fans of the AD&D game. The *Torment* computer game follows on the success of the best-selling *Baldur's Gate* computer game, also from Interplay.

$5.99/$7.95 CAN
TSR 21527
ISBN 0-7869-1527-7

The Temptation of Elminster

A FORGOTTEN REALMS Novel
By Ed Greenwood

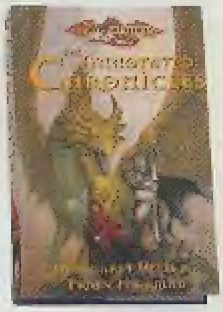


A paperback reprint of the third in Ed Greenwood's chronicles of the life and adventures of Elminster, the most famous wizard in the FORGOTTEN REALMS setting.

$5.99/$7.95 CAN
TSR 21427
ISBN 0-7869-1427-0

The Annotated DRAGONLANCE Chronicles

A DRAGONLANCE Novel Collection,
By Margaret Weis and Tracy Hickman



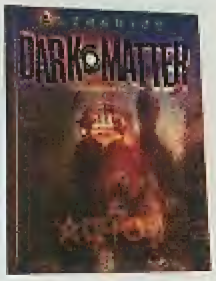
The beginning of the epic story that has won the hearts of more than 16 million readers worldwide. Now Margaret Weis and Tracy Hickman add notes, commentary, and original source material to *Dragons of Autumn Twilight*, *Dragons of Winter Night*, and *Dragons of Spring Dawning*, and they offer observations on the fifteen-year phenomenon that is the DRAGONLANCE saga.

This edition of the Chronicles Trilogy contains new material never before published.

$34.99/$50.00 CAN
TSR 21526
ISBN 0-7869-1526-9

DARK·MATTER

An ALTERNITY Campaign Setting
By Wolfgang Baur with Monte Cook



In the modern day, not everything is as it appears. Paranormal occurrences and occult activities are becoming commonplace. These events are quickly hidden from public view by various world governments and other organizations who have no understanding of their significance. Doorways to other worlds are opening, and it's up to the heroes of the Hoffmann Institute to determine friend from foe, good from evil, and conspiracy from happenstance.

The DARK•MATTER Campaign Setting expands the ALTERNITY game by introducing a near-future world full of the paranormal and the occult, laced with conspiracies that threaten the entire world.

$29.95/$43.95 CAN
TSR 11433
ISBN 0-7869-1433-5

Mindwalking: A Guide to Psionics

An ALTERNITY Accessory
By JD Wiker

This comprehensive guide expands upon the psionics rules from the ALTERNITY *Player's Handbook*, adding new skills and powers, providing guidelines for incorporating psionics into different science fiction genres, and providing integrated material for the STAR*DRIVE and DARK•MATTER™ campaign settings.

$18.95/$27.95 CAN
TSR 11384
ISBN 0-7869-1384-3

Return to White Plume Mountain

A GREYHAWK Adventure
By Bruce R. Cordell

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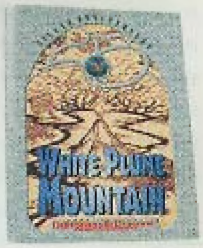

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By Eric L. Boyd

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TSR NEWS

Contest Winners Unearthed

We finally have the results of the "Beastly Research" contest. With more than two hundred entries, it was our most popular and successful contest to date.

Many entries focused on animal and monster hybrids, and dragon variants were also popular. Thanks to everyone who sent in an entry—they were all very, er, imaginative. Except the ones that weren't. But let's not dwell on the past.

Once again, you've all made the task of picking a winner extremely difficult, but after several passes through the huge stack of entries, we threw them off the roof of the Wizards of the Coast offices and picked the ones that made it to the mana pool.

The winner for best AD&D game creature is Richard R. Sanders of Hartwell, GA. He sent in a fantastically frightening entry dubbed the visceraith.

The prize for a SAGA creature goes to Leon Chang, of San Diego, CA. His shadow draining umbrage really took our breath away.

Leon also took Honorable Mention honors for his AD&D entry, the soul mask, along with Talon Dunning of Atlanta, GA for his dvati. Congratulations to all our winners.

Keep checking the pages of *DRAGON Magazine* for a "Dragon's Bestiary" featuring our top AD&D entries.

Warriors of the Web

In September, TSR released its first Web-enhanced AD&D game product, Warriors of Heaven. "We wanted to give fans more than their money's worth," explains designer Chris Perkins, "and I wanted to design an adventure specifically for celestial PCs, to show DMs how it could be done." The web adventure is titled "Devil's Deal," and most of the action takes place in a fortress on Phlegethos, the fourth layer of Baator, where "the characters have to outsmart a fiend on his own turf."

The Web site also presents a new celestial PC race. The quesar were creatures created by the aasimon as servants, but they rebelled. Chris says, "They're ideal as player characters—they have a lot of freedom, they're weird, and they're tough!"

Fans can download two free articles from www.wizards.com.

ProFiles

BILL SLAVICSEK

Bill Slavicsek, Director of Roleplaying Game Design for Wizards of the Coast, has exciting plans for the future.

by Stephen Kenson

Bill Slavicsek's resume reads like a history of roleplaying games. One of the industry's most celebrated designers, Slavicsek has worked on games ranging from *Star Wars* and *Torg* (from West End Games), to the ALTERNITY® Science Fiction Roleplaying Game and the new DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® Adventure Game. He won the Origins Award for Best Roleplaying Game Supplement in 1988 (for *The Star Wars Sourcebook*) and again for Best Roleplaying Game Adventure in 1995 (for *Council of Wyrms*, re-released this month).

Born and raised in New York City, Slavicsek was a comic book, horror, and science fiction fan from the beginning. "Some of my earliest memories involve looking at ancient issues of Marvel Comics, drawing my own comics, and watching old SF and horror movies on TV," he says. Slavicsek went to the High School of Art & Design in Manhattan, where he studied cartooning and advertising art. Later he majored in Communications Arts at St. John's University.

After graduating, Slavicsek worked as an editor at a weekly newspaper in Queens, New York, for about a year. Then he answered an ad in the *New York Times* and became an editor at West End Games in 1986. During his five years with West End, Slavicsek worked on a wide variety of games. He was on the editorial team that worked on the original *Star Wars Roleplaying Game* rulebook, and he co-designed *Torg* with well-known game designer Greg Gorden.

"The summer that the first *Star Wars* movie came out," reports Slavicsek, "I saw it thirty-eight times!" When deadline difficulties arose for West End's *Star Wars Sourcebook*, Slavicsek jumped in to help and ended up writing most of the book. "Alien names I invented for that book can be seen on action figures from the original trilogy of movies today," he says with a note of pride. "Twi'lek, the name of the species that Bib Fortuna belonged to; Ithorian, the name of the Hammerhead species; and a lot of the aliens from the Mos Eisley Cantina were named by me and Grant Boucher in *Galaxy Guide 1: A New Hope*."

Slavicsek left West End Games in 1991 to pursue freelance opportunities, including writing *A Guide to the Star Wars Universe*, a definitive reference of *Star Wars* movies, books, and games that was published by Del Rey in 1994.

In 1993, Slavicsek took a designer/editor position with TSR, where he designed the ALTERNITY game with Rich Baker. Slavicsek's other credits for TSR include the Revised *DARK SUN® Campaign Setting* and *The Nightmare Lands* for the RAVENLOFT® setting.

"Some of my personal bests include the pair of PLANESCAPE® adventures I wrote—*The Deva Spark* and *Harbinger House*," says Slavicsek. "PLANESCAPE brought out the best in the people who worked on it. I'm also extremely proud of the ALTERNITY game system. I worked with a great team that featured my co-designer Rich Baker, editor Kim Mohan, David Eckelberry, Jim Butler, and the great visual contributions of rk post."

By the end of 1997, he was the Director of the TSR Product Group for Wizards of the Coast, a job that has since been divided in two, making Slavicsek the Director of Roleplaying Game design, where he oversees the entire staff of RPG designers and editors. "Part of my job is to help continue to improve the quality of our products and advance the state of design. I have the most talented team in the industry, and I'm very proud of the work we're putting out—and excited about upcoming titles, too!"

Those upcoming titles include the adventure *Murder in Drivespace* for the ALTERNITY game's STAR*DRIVE® setting. Another upcoming project is an updated version of *A Guide to the Star Wars Universe* that includes all the novels, games, and comics that appeared since the last Guide (although it does not contain material from *Episode One: The Phantom Menace*). The book is due in 2000.

Slavicsek is currently working on various "acquisition products." "These are games designed to get new people into the RPG hobby," he explains. "Our current strategy starts with Fast-Play Games that lead to a boxed set, which in turn leads to the core product.

"I think the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS Adventure Game is a great place for new players to begin, and the stuff I've been helping to develop since then is even better. Just wait until you see it."

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